

I Didn't Think I Could Be Made Smaller (DreamNotFound)

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/27667850) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/27667850>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Choose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Video Blogging RPF , Minecraft (Video Game)
Relationship:	Clay Dream/GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF) , Clay Dream & GeorgeNotFound & Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF) , Clay Dream & GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF) , Clay Dream & Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF) , GeorgeNotFound & Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF)
Character:	Clay Dream (Video Blogging RPF) , GeorgeNotFound (Video Blogging RPF) , Sapnap (Video Blogging RPF)
Additional Tags:	Trauma , Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - PTSD , Implied/Referenced Sexual Assault , Hurt/Comfort , Emotional Hurt/Comfort , Angst and Hurt/Comfort , Angst , Angst with a Happy Ending , Dissociation , Mental Health Issues , Triggers , Emotional Manipulation , Emotional Hurt , In which George doesn't talk about his feelings and Dream has to figure it out , Pining , Mutual Pining , Romance , Eventual Romance , Eventual Happy Ending , Cyber stalking , Flashbacks , recovering from trauma , Threats of Violence , Threats , Sapnap and Dream would kill for George , Violence , Sleep Triggers , Therapy , therapist , Abusive Texts , Emotional Abuse , Blood , Blood and Injury , Bruises , Fist Fights , Fights , Fluff , Fluff and Angst
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of The Story and the Alternate Chapters (DNF) , Part 1 of DreamNotFound COMFORT Fics
Collections:	rye's lifeblood (alternatively titled: rye's favorites) , Wolfis Minecraft Library
Stats:	Published: 2020-11-22 Completed: 2020-12-06 Chapters: 18/18 Words: 35264

I Didn't Think I Could Be Made Smaller (DreamNotFound)

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Summary

George goes on a date, and it goes really badly. REALLY badly.

The assault plagues him for days, to where he kind of disappears. Can they bring him back out of the pit of despair?

(Basically a hurt/comfort where George has to deal with this huge thing and has no idea how, so he just doesn't.)

A/N: If George or Dream ever sees this, I'm sorry. I don't want this story to be true for either you. I'm just doing something. If you want it taken down, lmk.

Notes

Thank you so much for reading! Please feel free to leave any feedback, as this is my first time writing in this fandom, or for RPF. :)

PLEASE READ ALL TAGS AND WARNINGS! This piece is not extremely explicit, but it can still be triggering.

Finding Escape

The screen in front of George was not enough to break through his reverie. The pixels blurred and became random spots of light. Colors, apparently dim and unsaturated to him, and nothing else. His eyes glazed over and he went inside of himself, purely accidentally, until the crawling horror of his reality shoved him back out.

Maybe now wasn't the time for internal reflection.

"George?" Dream's cautious voice reached, empty of teasing or malice. He sounded genuinely worried, but George couldn't have that.

"Yeah? Oh sorry, just got distracted by a text." George replied, half-heartedly.

"That bad, huh?"

"What?"

"Your date? It went that badly?" Dream's voice was soft, more so than George might have expected. Why wasn't he teasing?

"Yeah, something like that. Um, she just said she wasn't interested, so that was rough." Thank goodness they weren't streaming right now. He had the forethought to tell Dream that he wasn't in the mood tonight.

"Oh, that's awful! Well, she doesn't know what she is missing, honestly! You are so sweet and wonderful, and she is just too dumb to realize it! Right, Sapnap?"

"Huh? Oh right! Yeah, we love you Georgie. She's an idiot."

George couldn't help but smile just a little. They were teasing him a bit, but it did help. At least it was helping to ground him with them, rather than in his own dark thoughts. "Thanks guys, I'm sure I'll feel better about it soon," he lied smoothly.

It wasn't that *she* hadn't been interested in him, it was that *he* had been far too interested. George hadn't told his friends about the true fluidity of his sexuality yet, and he had no plans to tell them what Dylan had done. Dream and Sapnap were not homophobic, and they would never judge him, but... It was one thing for them to flirt with him, thinking they were all completely straight, but if they knew he wasn't... Would that change the relationship? He didn't want to find out.

And he didn't want them to pity him. They already teased him about his size so much, and with what happened, he just felt even tinier, weaker, and more pathetic. It wasn't fair to himself, but he just couldn't pull himself out of it.

"You alright?" Dream interrupted his train of thought tentatively.

"Yeah, just... I'm just tired... Socializing and rejection and all that. I think I'm going to head to bed."

"Yeah, okay..."

George forced a smile onto his face, knowing it would be heard. "Don't worry about me! I'm alright. It's just been a long day."

This seemed to make Dream feel better, and some of his jovial nature slid back in. “Alright, let George get his beauty rest, I got it.”

“Night, Georgie!” Sapnap called, barely paying attention as he fought a spider.

“Night!” He replied with forced enthusiasm, and he disconnected the call.

The moment their voices slipped out of his ears, the crashing depression and self-loathing roared back in. He rested his head on the gentle glow of his computer screen for a moment, trying to keep some composure about him.

It wasn’t *that* bad, honestly. Yeah, he was still a lot bit sore, and he just wanted to *scream* , but it wasn’t that bad. Right?

Right?

He dragged himself away from the monitor, not even bothering to turn it off. He had managed to log out of whatever server they had been in, but he couldn’t bring himself to close the game. The splash text grew and shrank, “All is full of love!” It mocked him.

It was impossible to hold himself up, so his attempts to stand ended up being a controlled fall onto his unmade bed. He was so thankful Dylan had taken him somewhere. If it had happened in his own room... He pushed that thought out of his mind and cuddled into his sheets. Sometimes, he slept without clothes, but tonight, he couldn’t even bear to take off his socks.

He hadn’t been lying about how tired he felt, just its cause, but he was still surprised to find how deep and gnawing the exhaustion was. Sleep took him almost immediately, and for a while, he was able to relax, to rest, to feel peace.

But he didn’t get that long. Hands on his body, holding him down, touching him, grabbing him, feeling him, opening him. Thrashing, fighting, trying to escape, crying out, but he couldn’t stop those evil hands. He succumbed to them again.

And again.

And again.

He was tied to the nightmare, unable to wake. Fighting the hands and his own sleep, but trapped. He could almost hear the strangled cries from the waking world, but he couldn’t follow them. He couldn’t escape.

Please, let me go! Don’t...

Finally, his eyes flew open. His sheets were tangled around his limp body, and he was already panting desperately. He sat up and ripped the sheets away.

Alright, so maybe it was bad...

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He managed to snag a few more fitful hours of sleep throughout the night, but it wasn’t nearly enough to help with the blanket of exhaustion that threatened to overwhelm him. This wasn’t a

good sign, but he wasn't sure what to do about it.

Out of habit, he slumped into his computer chair, noticing the splash text that was still flashing from the night before. "All is full of love!" It filled him with disgust and rage, so he closed out of Minecraft instead of mindlessly logging in somewhere. He pulled up twitter and started scrolling, hoping to take his mind off it. It didn't help.

Finally, after realizing he was avoiding it, he pulled out his phone. Dream and Sapnap had both messaged him, privately and in the group chat. A couple other random messages from various people, and one text.

**Text from Dylan:** *Had fun last night. wbu? u wanna do it again?*

Before he could even think, his phone had hit the ground. He must have thrown it or dropped it, but it hadn't even occurred to him to do it. It just happened. His phone lay on the carpet facedown, and he kept waiting for it to sizzle against the fibers, to sink through to the ground below, dissolving everything in its path like the yellow blood from *Alien*.

But it just lay there, mocking him.

After sometime, he wasn't sure how long, he picked up the phone between two cautious fingers, as if it would bite him. It remained an inert hunk of minerals. He sucked in a deep breath and flipped the phone over, revealing the heinous message that had popped up at the end of the previously innocuous chain.

He blocked the number, deleted the message, and threw the phone to his bed.

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The stupor he managed to sink into was legendary. With his phone face down on his bed, unable to haunt him, he kind of slipped away. His eyes glazed over and he just kind of sat there, staring at the wall. He felt nothing. He saw nothing. He was nothing. He just ceased to be.

It was the most peace he had felt all day.

His slow descent into the void was suddenly disturbed by the muffled sounds of his phone buzzing and singing against his sheets. George blinked his eyes a few times as his consciousness returned to his body. It was almost painful, and the self-hatred and fear dropped onto his chest like a sack of bricks.

He really thought about ignoring the call and falling back into whatever nothingness he had managed to fall into, but then he noticed his room was rapidly getting dark. With a surge of confused energy he grabbed his phone. He quickly noted that it was Dream calling, but ignored that for the moment to see the time.

Five hours had passed since he had deleted that text.

What the hell?

He flipped down the notifications to see there were even more than before. He had actually missed a few calls from Sapnap and Dream each, and the last messages in the chains were getting

increasingly worried and desperate.

He didn't want them to hear his voice right now. It was thick in his throat, and tears were almost falling down his cheeks. He hadn't realized this until he thought about picking up the phone.

He ignored the call.

He sent a group text to Dream and Sapnap at once.

Sorry. Think I'm coming down with something. Throat sore. Feeling sick. Talk later.

He briefly looked through the rest of their messages, just checking to see if there was anything he needed to be aware of, but there really wasn't. Just lots of messages (most of them from Dream) trying to figure out why he wasn't replying. Sweet, but not immediately important.

After quickly scanning and ignoring the rest of the notifications, a message from Dream popped up.

Feel better soon :)

George didn't bother replying.

Coping (or Something Close To It)

Despite all his effort, he couldn't sink into that emptiness from earlier, and his stomach kept growling at him, so he pulled himself up off the bed and dragged his body to the kitchen to make something to eat. Something to eat turned out to be assorted bits and pieces from leftovers and snacks that he had, trying to find the thing that would make him actually want an entire meal. Eventually, he had eaten enough that his stomach stopped complaining, so he let the fridge fall shut and meandered back to his empty room.

He sat in front of his computer, streaming some show on some website for hours. He didn't really know what he was watching, but it made noise and the colors moved and he could just kind of pretend like he was watching and become black. It was peaceful, and he couldn't do anything else.

Eventually, he fell asleep.

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It continued like this for a few days. The silence from George was absolutely deafening to Dream and Sapnap, to the point that even Sapnap was genuinely worried about the friend he teased the most. Every few hours, one or both would cautiously reach out, offering support and concern.

George would reply, sometimes immediately, sometimes after many hours (with no relation to the time in England), with a word or phrase, mostly just reiterating that he was still, in fact, sick.

But the rest of the Dream Team had seen George sick before, and he hadn't been like this. He still recorded and streamed and hung out, just with a failing voice or occasional sneezes.

The concern grew to where it started to spread to other Minecraft Youtubers. BadBoyHalo reached out fairly early on, and got a similar concise response. Other messages started to trickle in as it continued on, and he replied to all of them, but at a minimum.

After about 7 or 8 days, his fans started to really worry. Sapnap and Dream had both streamed since the incident, and George hadn't made a single appearance in either one. When fans asked, "What happened to him?" They quickly said he was sick, but the fans still worried.

Dedicated fans realized there had been absolutely nothing from George for days. George wasn't the most consistent uploader or poster, but he didn't usually go this long. Plus, with the sketchy evasive responses from all his friends, who were now bombarded by "Where's George? Is he okay?", it was starting to look very suspicious.

George had been watching this develop on twitter, the slow ramp up to pure panic. It kind of made him feel better, knowing that people wanted him in their lives again, and had noticed when he had disappeared. He had felt it from Dream and Sapnap, but he hadn't expected it from so many other people. He felt warm for the first time in days.

*Hey everyone, I appreciate your concerns and well wishes. I am OKAY. I just got really sick, and it basically took me out for a while. I don't remember much, but I'm glad I didn't post anything too crazy! Feeling much better, will be back up again soon. :]*

As soon as he posted the tweet, it exploded, filled with well-wishes and the desire to send him soup. He smiled, and it felt real and good. There was still a heavy ache in his heart, but his physical injuries were mostly gone. He decided that he had wallowed enough. He would be fine.

At least he hoped so.

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After some hesitation, he called the group chat for Dream and Sapnap.

Dream picked up almost immediately. “GEORGE!!!” His voice was *so* excited, and George couldn’t help but giggle.

“Hey, Dream, miss me?” George asked.

“More than you know,” Dream teased.

Sapnap joined the call, and announced his presence with, “Gogy? Is Gogy back?”

“Yeah, I’m back.”

“Let’s FUCKING GO, dude!” Sapnap paused, “Wait, is anyone streaming?”

“No.”

“Good. Let’s FUCKING GOOOOOOOOOO.”

George couldn’t help but laugh. “Good to be back.” He wasn’t even lying about that.

“We missed you, Georgie! Are you okay?” Sapnap asked, only teasing a little.

“I’m fine. Better now. That was a rough… cold or whatever.”

“Yeah it sounded like it!”

“I don’t think I’ve gone that long without hearing your voice in years! How am I supposed to live without your screams?” Dream cooed mockingly.

George rolled his eyes. “Seems like you survived just fine.”

“Only barely, George,” Dream pouted.

“Yeah, George, it was so calm. Me and Dream were flirting like crazy and no one was acting shocked and pretending they didn’t like it!”

“Oh my God,” George groaned, “Why am I friends with you guys?” But in reality, he knew why, and he was grinning.

Until he wasn’t.

His eyes unfocused and he was thrown back to that room. An evil grin filled his vision, and it said, “Don’t pretend you don’t like it.”

“NO!” George shouted, accidentally banging his knee into his desk in his attempt to escape. But he was just in his room. The hands that had been slowly reaching for him were gone, and he was just panting in his desk chair.

With Dream and Sapnap on the phone...

“No, you don’t want to play Minecraft or...?” Sapnap asked, cautiously, as if afraid George would snap at him.

“Oh, no, sorry!” George replied with a nervous chuckle, “My cat was about to eat something, and I hit my leg trying to stop him. Sorry about that. Minecraft sounds great.”

“Ooooookay,” Sapnap said suspiciously.

But Dream was unusually quiet.

There was nothing to be done about Dream’s silence though, because they were going into the server already. Besides, his silence wasn’t long lasting, and soon they were talking and laughing like nothing was wrong.

George felt a bit far away from them, but it felt like he was close enough to fake it. They didn’t seem to be at all suspicious, which made it easier, despite the sinking feeling in his chest.

As the game continued, he found himself able to forget more and more, to sink into it, to feel like things were normal. This was exactly what he needed, a good distraction! Not a week of darkness and loneliness. He didn’t need to talk to them about *it*, but he did need to talk to them.

But then, too soon, Sapnap had to go to bed, and Dream reluctantly agreed that he should sleep too, and George was left with a renewed pit in his stomach. Of course they couldn’t be with him 24 hours a day, but the thought of another nightmare filled night alone was too much for him.

But he just said, “Fiiiine. Be babies who can’t stay awake all night.”

“You know it, dude,” Sapnap shot back, “This baby likes his sleep, sometimes.”

“Oh my God.”

Sapnap’s grin could be heard as he said, “Night, Georgie.”

The “caller disconnected” notification dinged, and it was just George and Dream, sitting in silence for a moment.

“Aren’t you going to bed?” George asked, desperate to break the silence, to glean some kind of comfort from his best friend’s voice before he left.

“Are you sure you are alright, George?” Dream responded immediately.

“Y-yeah, I’m just fine. Not sick anymore...”

“George... I’ve known you for a while now, and I think something’s up. I know we joke around, but if something is wrong, you know you can talk to me about it, right?”

George put his head in his hands. *No, Dream, I don’t know that. I’m scared and this is just so fucking shameful.* “Yeah, I do know that. Thanks, Dream.”

“I *love* you, George. And that’s not just something I say for the streams, I *love* you. And I want

you to be okay.”

“Okay... Yeah, I know, Dream. And... And I love you, too.” It was much easier to say without everyone watching, waiting to clip it.

“Thank you. Now is there anything you want to talk about?” Dream pressed.

“No, honestly, it’s nothing. I just really wasn’t feeling well.”

“George, come on now...”

“FINE...” He paused for a moment to think of a good lie. “It was that girl. After she rejected me, she, uh, sent me a really nasty next. It really hurt and I had to block her. It just left me feeling weird. So when I got sick, I just couldn’t handle both.”

Dream was silent for a while, and George was worried he hadn’t believed him, but finally, he replied, “That’s awful. I’m so sorry, George. Well, *I’ll* always love you, and don’t you forget it!”

“Thank you, Dream... Sorry for disappearing. I just didn’t want to deal with anything, but I know you would have been there for me. Thank you. If only I could date you, problem solved!” George teased

Dream laughed, wheezing into the microphone for a moment.

It kind of stung. George hadn’t really been serious (had he?), but it wasn’t *that* funny. George knew Dream was straight, but he had been harboring a low level crush for him for a while now. Not that it had come up in the last week or so of agony, but it was still there. He knew it was impossible and pointless, but... ouch.

“Yeah, yeah!” Dream gasped, between tea kettle sounds, “And our entire fanbase would explode at once too. Win win!”

“That’s exactly what I was thinking. It would be good for a laugh to watch them freak the fuck out about it.”

Dream cackled breathlessly for a while longer, clearly enjoying the joke too much, but George couldn’t be *too* mad. Besides, realizing that it was about how the fans would react made him feel better, and it *was* funny to imagine. He found himself giggling right a long.

He had missed this.

After a while, when Dream finally caught his breath, he said, “Well, thanks for telling me, George. And please, don’t be nervous, okay? I know me and Sapnap tease you, but we love you, and we want you to be happy.”

“Thanks, Dream. I appreciate it. I really do.” George actually meant it, even though the interaction was a lie.

“Well, I really should sleep, and you probably should too, so I’m going to head out. Night!”

“Night!”

The call went silent after the notification telling him that Dream had left, and he just sat there, in the empty call, for a while, before he finally closed the window and went to bed. He felt empty and wished...

He wasn't sure what he wished for.

The Stream

He woke up much later to bright sunshine. It hadn't been good sleep, per se, but it was getting a little easier. In fact, he felt pretty okay. Why not give the people what they want and stream?

After a (much needed) shower, some food, and a message to his friends, he popped online without much warning.

Almost immediately, the stream was flooded with people sending him well-wishes and wondering if he was okay. He had to switch it to subscriber only chat almost immediately, and then he had to add slow mode, so he could read chat at all.

His eyes glanced over his cam window, and for a moment he was shocked by how gaunt he looked. It looked like he hadn't been eating at all (which, to be honest, he hadn't been.) At least they hopefully wouldn't doubt he had been sick.

"Yes, hello everyone, thank you for worrying! I am doing much better now, and I am ready to stream! What do you want to do today?"

It was easy to fall back into it, almost. The person he was on stream was a bit of a caricature, and it was nice to slip into his persona. It felt like GeorgeNotFound hadn't been hurt in the way that he had. It was freeing to say the least.

After a little while, Dream popped into the stream, which made chat go wild all over again. Sapnap came in after, and things were normal. Everything was fine, and George was smiling and laughing and joking around. He was free.

Then a donation came through that made him freeze. "Dylan donated six dollars and ninety cents."

There was a short pause while the auto-reader geared up to read the donation message, and George's gaze slid to the donation in horror, his eyes falling upon it's foul words just as she kept reading.

"Hey George, do you remember me? I had a lot of fun that night, but you aren't responding to my messages anymore. I just wanted to let you know that I would love to get between your legs again. Feel free to message me. :)"

It was an actual punch in the face, and his cheeks were turning bright red with rage and embarrassment. For a moment, he was completely speechless,

"WHAT?!" Dream shouted, in his way, with Sapnap snickering in the background.

With that, his brain finally got over the short circuit, and he quickly spat out, "That's a completely inappropriate joke, *Dylan*, children watch this stream. I'm blocking you from interacting with my account, and I will be sending your money back. Do not contact me again."

As he talked, he quickly IP blocked the Dylan from donating, commenting, subscribing, or even following. He was shaking by this point, and he could almost hear the words again, this time in Dylan's voice, while phantom hands brushed against him. How had Dylan even found him? Had he known who George was the entire time? Would he start spreading rumors about what they'd done?

"Damn George," Sapnap teased, "Didn't know you were such a heartbreaker. He wants you back,

and you blocked him?”

George was not ready for this kind of joking. That message had stabbed him in the gut. He was panting slightly and all of his motions were jerky. He couldn't really play, but he couldn't let the stream know what was happening. “Come on now, Sapnap, it's not appropriate. I didn't sleep with him” (on purpose) “and it's a gross joke to make. This isn't the place for that.”

“I dunno George, I've never seen you get a dono like that. Most fans talk about wanting to get it on with us, but none of them seem to think they've done it before!”

Sapnap's laughter was grating.

George clenched his hands, and his avatar stopped suddenly, as he tried to center himself. “You have heard of lying, haven't you Sapnap?”

“Yeah, but that seemed pretty confident to me?”

George rolled his eyes and forced himself to focus on the game, choosing to ignore Sapnap's sudden goal of being the most annoying person to have ever been born.

“Are you ashamed because Dylan is usually a man's name?” Dream interjected, joining in on the “fun”, “It's okay George! This isn't exactly how I thought you would come out to us, but I'm so glad you finally did!”

“Stop.” George whispered angrily. *Not you, Dream, please.*

“No, George, it's really okay!” Dream continued, wheezing lightly, “We support you no matter what.”

“I said stop!” His hands slammed down on the desk so hard that his cam shook violently. After a few deep breaths, he continued, in a cold, low voice, “My sexuality isn't what's important here. The issue is a disgusting dono that I didn't consent to. It's inappropriate, and I would appreciate it if we could move on.”

Everything was silent. Even the chat had slowed to a crawl, and the donos had stopped coming in.

After a moment, Dream broke the silence, “You're right. I'm sorry, George.”

“Yeah, sorry George.” Sapnap sounded sheepish as hell.

It was too much. “Sorry for that outburst everyone!” He slapped on a fake smile and looked right into the camera. “I just realized I haven't eaten in too many hours, and so I'm getting a little hangry. I'm going to take a moment to eat. Be back soon.”

He muted his mic and turned off his cam. As a last minute thought, he turned off donations as well.

Dream and Sapnap hadn't had a chance to say anything before he was gone, but he hoped that they would be filling space for him so he could “eat.”

But he wasn't eating. He went into his bathroom, shut the door, and broke down in tears. How could Dylan think he wanted to go again? Or was it just another power play, like the one from that night that kept replaying over and over again in his mind? Did Dylan like torturing him, was that why? Or did he actually believe that George had wanted it, enjoyed it?

Don't pretend you don't want it.

He ground his fists into his eye sockets, trying to forcefully dam up the tears. How long could he be away from his stream before people got suspicious? How could he have let himself snap like that on stream? What was wrong with him?

A minute passed, and another, with him just curled in a ball, leaning against the cabinet under the sink. Finally, he got a hold of himself and managed to stop the crying. His face was an absolute wreck, so he washed it, scrubbing the redness and the tear stains.

He almost looked normal again, but his eyes looked dead. A smile didn't help.

With a sigh, slipped back into his room.

"Hey everyone," he said as he turned his mic back on. The camera display flipped on, and the chat exploded with excitement. "Sorry about that again! I'm still getting used to how much I need to eat now that I'm feeling better. I barely ate anything while I was sick."

The lies came too smoothly. It was getting easier, and he wasn't sure if he liked that or not.

"Welcome back, dude. Feeling better now?" Sappnap asked, cautiously.

"Yeah, much better." Exaggerated grin for effect. "Don't forget to eat regularly, kids."

"That's good to hear." Dream this time, but just as cautious.

"Guys, I really am sorry. That was completely uncalled for. If you can forgive me, maybe we can get back to playing?"

They were still a bit hesitant, but they agreed and forgave him. It only took a few moments before they were teasing and laughing, and it was forgotten again, or so George thought.

After another half an hour of streaming, his body told him he was done. He normally liked to stream longer, but the chat was so understanding. He was so clearly recovering from a terrible sickness, what with his weight loss and snappishness, of course they didn't want him to push himself.

It felt a bit disingenuous, but he couldn't lie to himself and say he wasn't affected by what had happened, even if he wasn't telling people the real cause.

He waved goodbye, blew kisses, and shut it down with a huge sigh.

"George, what the hell was that?!" Sappnap asked the second they were off live.

"What was what?"

"I think what Sappnap is trying to ask is, 'are you okay?'" Dream countered.

George wasn't sure how Dream managed to communicate facial expressions with just his voice, but he could *hear* the glare. "Yeah, I'm just fine. Hungry, like I said."

"Don't lie to us, Georgie boy, something is definitely up." Sappnap insisted.

"You never turned donos back on," Dream added quietly.

"Nothing is 'up.' I'm just trying to get back into the swing of things, and I pushed myself too hard. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm exhausted, and I really need to get some sleep."

He disconnected before they could say another word and turned off his phone. There was no way he could deal with their questions, and he would probably just snap at them again anyway. Better to avoid them, at least for tonight.

In his dreams, Dylan kept finding him. It was like the worst kind of manhunt. No matter where he hid, no matter how well, Dylan would always find him, and then his hands...

Realization

Dream was streaming, for some reason. He didn't stream that much, especially with all the cheating accusations and nonsense that happened in the chats, but for some reason, that day just felt right. After George's outburst the night before, neither he nor Sapnap had heard a word from him, despite their best efforts, and it was putting Dream on edge.

He wasn't sure what had gone wrong. They teased each other like that *all the time*, and no one said boo about it. They had all gotten weird requests and gross messages, and they laughed it off. Hell, they read fanfiction together, with explicit play by play sex scenes, and it didn't bother them at all.

He was sure that something had happened to his friend, instead of him just getting sick, but he had no proof, and pushing George just made him snap shut even more. George wasn't one to lie to him, so it must have been serious, but he really couldn't hazard a guess. It wasn't over some girl rejecting him after a first date, though, that was for sure. There were a million girls out there who would be happy to date him (and one Dream...), and George had been rejected before.

Who was this girl? Who was this "Dylan." Were they the same person, secretly? Even if "Dylan" was the date from that night, the message had been far from a rejection...

Dream was so lost in thought that the stream started to catch on. A dono popped up, breaking his stupor.

"Christy donated ten dollars. Hey Dream, I love your content and I love you. Just checking in after George's stream. Are you guys okay?"

Dream shook his head and refocused. "Sorry guys, I just got super into what I was doing and I forgot I was streaming. Yes, George, Sapnap, and I are all fine. Sometimes friends accidentally push a friend's buttons too hard, but we talked about it during and after the stream, and everything is completely fine. Thanks for worrying about me, and I love you too, Christy."

Dream didn't feel like things between them were fine, but he knew better than to air their dirty laundry like that. If it became an issue to the point they couldn't work together, he might need to actually address it, but until then, everything was fine, at least for the fans.

A few donos later, a familiar name popped up.

"Dylan donated six dollars and ninety cents. Hey Dream, since George has blocked me from communicating with him, can you please tell him I want to talk to him. I'm not trying to push, I'm just bad at showing my feelings. Tell him I am begging for his forgiveness."

Dream really didn't like the sound of that. The first one had seemed like a joke, but this one... It seemed like an attack of some kind. Something about it left a bad taste in his mouth.

"Dylan, I have no idea who you are or what you are doing, but I am getting really tired of this. Whatever this thing is about George, clearly he is not comfortable. Leave him alone. I'm blocking you, and I'll be sending the info to all the streamers that George and I know so you won't be able to do this again. I don't care what happened, this is not okay." He let his voice be stern and angry, something he tried not to do, but he wanted to make a point.

As Dream was trying to block Dylan's IP, one last dono came through, the last one he would get to send.

“Dylan donated six dollars and ninety cents.”

“God dammit,” Dream muttered as he finished setting up the block and mass emailing it to every relevant person he could think of.

“I know you are blocking me, but just tell George I just thought he liked it rough. I’ll go easier on him next time.”

“Sorry chat!” Dream said, shouting over the dono, “I fixed it, he can’t donate again. Trolls like that are what makes this job really hard sometimes.”

The chat filled with rage at Dylan and support for Dream and George. Everyone was completely shocked that someone would pull such a heinous and inappropriate prank against two lovely people like that.

And then it clicked for Dream. “Oh.” He said it out loud, it shocked him so much, “OH! Oh my GOD.” It all made sense.

Poor George.

Of course, he didn’t say anything to his stream, just that he realized a good build plan or some other bullshit to distract them. By the end of the stream, no one had even clipped that part, having collectively agreed that Dylan shouldn’t get anymore attention. He was just a troll to them.

But Dream knew better.

~~~

George didn’t move all day. Okay, that was a lie, he got up and used the bathroom a few times, and he ate something once, but other than that, he just lay in his bed, letting his consciousness slip away into the void. It was quite peaceful there, and it seemed to be the only reprieve from the agony he felt, except for spending time with his friends, who he couldn’t stop being mean to.

He was a mess.

Sometime after the sun had disappeared, leaving his room dank and dark, his phone started to vibrate and sing. He didn’t budge. He just wanted to lay in the dark in peace (or agony).

It rang through and immediately started ringing again. George ignored it again. It rang through again. There was a pause, then a text message notification, and it started ringing again.

This was getting annoying. He picked up his phone, and it was Dream. Of course it was. He ignored the call, which showed him the text notification.

*George, we need to talk right now. It’s urgent!!!!*

His phone fell back to the bed.

It started ringing again, and he ignored it.

It started again, and he just lay there. At least the music was good. He was just sort of listening to it at this point.

Another text notification.

It rang again.

And again.

And AGAIN.

It was definitely annoying now, so he grabbed the phone and ignored the call. Then he saw the text.

*Dylan donated to my stream. Pick. Up. The. Phone.*

The moment he finished reading, the phone rang again. He answered it in a second.

“There you are! You were starting to scare me, George.”

“What did he say?” George didn’t like the fear that painted his voice, or the desperation, but it was too late now.

“He... Look George, I blocked him from my stream, and I told everyone else to do the same. He won’t be pulling that trick again.” There was a pause, and then Dream continued, quieter, “I’m sorry I didn’t take it seriously on your stream. I really thought it was just a joke, and I should have realized sooner how much it was affecting you.”

George faked a laugh. “What are you talking about?”

“It’s okay, George, you can tell me. You can trust me. I might understand more than you think...”

The blood in his veins went cold. His heart stopped. Was he even breathing? “What?” George croaked. He cleared his throat, and tried again. “What are you talking about?”

“I know you pretty well George, better than you might think. I think something bad happened that night, and I think it’s been hurting you ever since.”

“Dream, don’t...” but it was so quiet, he wasn’t sure it was even audible.

“George... Did you go on a date with this Dylan instead... And then it went... badly?” Dream was really having trouble asking the question.

But it didn’t matter, because George was already fighting back tears. He said nothing.

“I know this is... difficult, but the reason I ask is because of something Dy- he said in the dono. See I was with a girl once, and she... She pushed me too hard, too fast. She assaulted me, George. When I asked her why, why she did it, when I had been so...” Dream’s voice broke for a moment, but he powered through, “so clear, she said... you know what she said? She said, ‘I just thought you liked it rough, sorry.’”

George’s breathing hitched audibly. He was fully crying now, tears streaming down his face. *No, no, no, no! How could he figure it out?! Please don’t know this about me.* Even as Dream was sharing his own experience, it still hurt George, because... He didn’t know why, but it was different. He would never judge Dream for something like this, but he judged himself.

“That’s exactly what Dylan said in the last dono before I blocked him, and it hit me. That maybe the same thing happened to you, and that’s why you’ve been like this. I felt sick for a while after, couldn’t eat, snapped at my friends. My mom helped me out actually. She didn’t know what

happened, but she marched into therapy and told me to spill my guts. It helped a lot.”

“Dream... I...” But George couldn’t continue, he was crying too hard.

And when Dream replied, his voice sounded a bit teary too, “I can’t physically march you into therapy like my mom did, but I’m not kidding when I tell you that I *love* you, and I really want to help in any way I can. You don’t have to talk to me about it, but if you want to...”

“Dream...” George sobbed, trying to say something, anything, but the words were thick in his throat. The only thing he could manage was, “I didn’t want to come out to you this way.”

Despite everything, that had been ridiculous. Dream was holding back laughter, but then George burst out, laughing uproariously through his tears. That wasn’t exactly the thing he meant to say, but it eased the tension.

When they calmed down, George clarified, “It’s not because I think you’re homophobic or anything! It’s just...”

“You were afraid it might change the dynamic if I was straight, and you didn’t want to lose what we had?” Dream finished.

“Yeah... How did you know?!”

“Well, um, I’m not exactly straight either.”

“Oh.”

“Oh, indeed, but that’s not what’s important now! What can I do to make you feel better?”

“I could really use a hug,” George blurted, before he could control himself, “but I know that’s impossible!” he corrected.

Dream was silent for a while, and George was worried he had gone too far, but then finally...

“Alright, bet. You live in Brighton, in England, correct?”

“Dream, I was kidding.”

“Let me see when the next flight is, and I’ll get on it.

“Dream, please, I...”

“Money is no object, and we’ve been meaning to do this right? My friend needs a hug and I want to give him one!”

“Dream, really, you can’t!”

“Do you not want me to come out?”

“No, I do, genuinely, want you to come, it’s just...”

“I understand the anxiety, *believe* me I do. But George, I am willing to do this for you. I *want* to do this for you. Please, let me.”

George thought about it. Getting a hug would be great, especially from someone who understood (and especially from Dream), but what about his little crush? What about his desire to be comforted in every way and shown how *it* is done correctly by someone he trusts? Cause that was

something that had been popping up too.

“George, if you don’t want me to come out to you, I won’t of course I won’t. But please let me support my friend. This isn’t me swooping in to use our new found understanding of each other’s sexualities to start a relationship, or something else gross like that. This is me, your friend of many years, getting a kick in the pants to finally meet you IRL. You’ve been hurt, and you can’t be alone right now. It doesn’t have to be me, but please don’t isolate yourself. Please...”

The tears started falling even harder. “Okay... But you can’t be mad if I start crying all over you.”

“I would never be mad at that. And I can be there as soon as Friday, if you want.”

It was Wednesday that day. Two days? “Really?” George asked quietly.

“Really really.”

“Okay.”

“Okay? Like you want me to come out?”

“Well, you already came out to me Dream, but yeah, you can visit if you’d like.”

Dream let out a soft laugh, “Shut up, George,” he murmured, without a hint of malice.

## Impatience

George wasn't ready to talk to Dream about the assault, and Dream didn't really seem to want to go into detail about what had happened to him, so it worked out well. George was eager to leave the uncomfortable topic of discussion behind, maybe forever, and Dream wasn't one to push, usually. They spent that time figuring out the logistics of him coming out, where he would stay (spare bedroom in George's place), pickup arrangements etc. They settled on a five day stint in England, Friday midday to Tuesday evening.

Finally, with plans made and tickets bought, they agreed to sleep.

"Are you sure you'll be alright?" Dream asked, not sure if he should end the call.

"Yeah, I'll be fine."

"I can stay on, if you like, until you sleep."

That sounded amazing to George, and not even in a romantic way (but also in a romantic way). There was something appealing about knowing someone would be listening, making sure nothing bad could happen to him. Sometimes he regretted moving out, though if his mum had seen him like this...

"Uh, no," George replied, cursing himself, "but I appreciate the offer."

"It's really no bother at all, George. I don't mind."

"I just don't want you to get the wrong idea."

Dream laughed, startling George a bit. "If I was flirting with you, you would know."

*I might not*, George thought, but out loud he said, "No! The wrong idea about me! Like that I'm using this to get you to do things for me or something..."

"Ohhhhh! George, no, I don't think you are using this for anything. I literally had to drag it out of you, and you *still* won't talk about it or even say the word out loud. I'm pretty sure if I hadn't figured it out, you would never have told me."

"Yeah, probably not," George admitted.

Dream sighed for a solid minute. "When I told you that you can trust me with anything, I meant it. I wouldn't judge you for this. I *don't* judge you for this."

"I know that *now* , but, you know, I get... nervous."

"Nervous?"

"Big emotional displays are you and Sapnap's thing! I don't talk about this stuff. And besides, you never told me about your... thing, before now."

"That's true... I'm not mad or hurt that you didn't tell me. I totally get it. But I am sad that you had to go through this all alone so far."

"You did too."

“Not completely, but that’s *why* I don’t want you to have to go through it all alone, because I know what it feels like, and I would *never* wish that on anyone, but especially not you, George.” His voice was suddenly soft and sweet and caring, and it was far too much.

“T-thanks Dream,” George mumbled nervously.

“You’re welcome. Now, do you want me to stay on the call with you?”

Fuck it, right? “Yeah, sure...”

“Alright, I will. And I’ll be seeing you soon. Night, George.”

“Night, Dream.”

~~~

The nightmares still came that night, of course they did, but it was a little easier. He still got chased, but Dream was sending him messages, 1000 IQ plays to get away from Dylan. He still got caught sometimes, but it was far less, and he was definitely getting better at escaping.

He felt better knowing he wasn’t the only one who knew.

Despite the nightmares on and off, George managed to sleep the night through. Out of habit, he picked up his phone to check his notifications and saw that the call from the night before was still going. He pressed his ear to the receiver, and there it was, the soft snoring (interrupted by much louder snoring) of a sleeping Dream.

Dream hadn’t hung up.

George wasn’t sure what that meant and decided not to dwell on it. His feelings for Dream weren’t really feasible right now, considering what had *just* happened. It did mean something, however, and George allowed himself to feel touched, even though he quietly hung up the phone. That way, if it was an accident, Dream would never know.

An hour later, the text came.

You hung up on me. >:(

George smiled. So it was on purpose? Hmmm.

Only about an hour ago. I woke up, and I didn’t want to wake you.

Oh. Okay, that’s fair. Morning!

George couldn’t help but smile. Dream was a good friend.

~~~

The two days just flew by, because there was honestly a lot to do. George had to clean his entire place, strip it of the depression aesthetic that had taken over, and prepare the guest room for Dream. At some point, he apologized to Sapnap over text, saying he was dealing with something that had nothing to do with him or their friendship, and that they would talk soon. Besides that, he ignored everyone (except Dream).

The amount of distraction was good for George. His nights were still hard, scary places, but at least during the day, he could ignore the gnawing pit in his stomach, choosing instead to focus on the fact that he was preparing to see Dream.

He couldn't believe that Dream was ACTUALLY coming. It seemed completely fake. George hadn't even really seen Dream's face yet, just a couple of feet pics and snaps of other random body parts. He had a general idea, but the full face, just right there? It felt a little illegal.

He checked his phone again, staring at the last message from Dream.

*Alright, getting on the plane now. See you soon! :D*

George paced in his apartment. Dream wasn't messing with him, right? He wouldn't. He couldn't. Not after Dylan. They tease each other, but Dream wouldn't stand him up, right?

He really hoped not.

He hadn't told Sapnap anything about Dylan or Dream coming over. He didn't want to explain it all, and he hadn't ever actually *told* Dream. They still hadn't talked about it, and he didn't think he ever would.

If he thought about it too much, he still felt small.

The minutes dragged by, slower than ever before. At that rate, he was worried time might start going backwards just to spite him. Nothing settled him and nothing distracted him. The only thought he had was "HUG from DREAM" on repeat.

Finally, his alarm went off, as if he wasn't literally staring at the time, waiting for the minute to finally switch over. He practically ran out the door, fell into his car, and shot out of there like a rocket.

*Dream.*

He got to the airport a little (a lot) early and waited *very patiently* for Dream to arrive. Heathrow airport was absolutely huge, and he allowed himself to get lost in the giant bays and walls of people, for the distraction of it.

Finally, the text he had been waiting for. He was shaking with nerves and excitement.

*I'm here! Just got off the plane. Meet me at baggage claim?*

Another text, with an image attached. The image was of a man's torso and legs. Dream showing his outfit.

*I'm nervous to send this to you, but I don't know why, since you are literally about to see me. I'm in a yellow hoodie and black pants. See you soon! <3*

The heart killed George. He died in that terminal and floated away. It was all too much. Dream had flown from Florida to England with two days notice just to give George a hug? That was too much

kindness, and it made George's heart burst.

The walk to baggage claim helped calm his jangled nerves, though. Good exercise can do that. It felt like he would never get there, as his excitement and ramped up brain was making it seem like he was going much slower.

But finally, *finally*, he got to the baggage claim, and finally, *finally*, there he was. George was sure of it.

The tall man in the yellow hoodie turned, as if sensing George's breathless presence, and they locked eyes.

*Fuck he's cute*, George's brain inserted without prompting, but he pushed it aside. Even after he ignored the attractiveness, he couldn't help but take in Dream's features. His dirty blonde hair (which George would have just called light brown, honestly), his strong jaw, the freckles, the searching golden eyes (which George knew were actually green). What a privilege, just to be able to *look*.

Dream's face was shocked for a moment, but then, it relaxed, collapsing into an easy expression that grew into a 1000 watt smile. "George!"



## Embrace

George was ready for his hug, but Dream casually stopped him. For a moment, George's heart broke, but Dream quietly whispered, "Do you want to cry in this airport?"

"No..."

"Exactly. I want to hug you, but I also know how you feel about public displays of anything. You can have all the hugs you want once we are at your place, okay?" The words were as cushioned, soft, and considerate as possible, as Dream knew how fragile George must have been. His expression was encouraging and held a promise for an intense embrace later on.

And of course Dream was right and being far more rational than George, but my goodness if that didn't make George feel like the biggest fucking simp. It was embarrassing, but thankfully, Dream didn't tease him about it. Maybe he thought George was just seeking any comfort and not seeking Dream specifically, which was partially true...

The walk back out of the airport felt much longer, and every shop that had blitzed past George without a glance was suddenly huge. The building was never ending. How fast had he been going on his way in? Or was it the knowledge that he couldn't touch Dream until they escaped this ridiculously fucking huge airport?

Dream seemed completely at ease, as if they weren't meeting for the first time ever. George kept stealing glances at his face, seeing no trace of anything but a relaxed smile and a nonchalant gaze at the path in front of them. (He might have also been stealing glances to catch new angles of his friend's face, but just to satiate a long running curiosity, and nothing more.)

Neither of them really knew what to say.

Finally, at some point, it occurred to George. "You said your hoodie is yellow, right?"

"Yeah."

"But you don't really like yellow? Not enough to get a yellow hoodie. And your favorite color... Is the hoodie green?"

"Yeah, it is."

"Why didn't you say green hoodie then?"

"Because you wouldn't be able to see it. If I'm going to have you looking for me, I need to tell you what *you* will see, not what someone else would see."

George paused for a moment, really taken back by something so small. "Thanks..."

"Of course." Dream made a point to turn to him and flash a grin. "Anyway, you have those color blind glasses at home, right? I kind of want to see what I look like to you with them on, so I figured green would be a good color to wear."

"Yeah, I think that would be nice." George couldn't flash back such a huge grin, he was too nervous, but he did have a small smile on his face, mostly for himself, as he stared at his shoes and the floor of the airport.

~~~

Despite the fact that time slowed to a crawl and their pace through the airport felt like walking backwards, they managed to escape into the brisk wind of England. Dream was a little cold already, even with his hoodie. He was not used to the real winters of the north.

Again, George really wanted the hug when they got into the car, but Dream stopped him before he could even reach over.

“George, I really feel like this hug is going to be a huge emotional dam break for you. You don’t want to do that in the parking lot of Heathrow, some miles away from your place. I want to hug you too, but we have to be patient. Plus, I don’t think you’ll be able to drive after, and I can’t drive your backwards car.”

“Yeah, I know,” George replied, as if he hadn’t planned to ignore all that.

The only problem was, Brighton was over an hour away, without traffic, and of course there would be traffic.

Thankfully, the awkward walk in the airport seemed to have been shattered by something, maybe the fact the Dream’s voice wouldn’t be recognized by a fan in George’s car, and they fell into easy conversation. Dream talked about the flight, George talked about plans, and they both chatted about everything under the sun. The drive went by much quicker than the meander out of Heathrow, despite how much longer the car ride must have been, and George realized it was because he finally believed that Dream wanted to be there.

How he had ever doubted that, he didn’t know.

Dream was clearly so happy to see him, even if he was holding back something, and that made George feel infinitely better. He wasn’t sure why he was so nervous, so sure his friend was faking, when Dream had literally paid for his own eight hour flight to get there, but the anxiety lingered.

Suddenly, they were actually at George’s flat, and everything seemed so real and powerful. He was parking the car, mere feet away from the privacy of his own place, and *Dream was with him*. He had to forcibly hold his hands steady, turning the wheel and focusing everything on the road so he could park properly.

Then the car was parked. Then the car was off. Then it was just Dream and George, sitting in front of the building, afraid to take the next step. The impasse only lasted a moment, when Dream realized they had stopped and opened the door without a moment of hesitation.

“This your place?” he asked.

“Yeah, welcome to my humble abode, Dream.”

George fumbled with the keys for a moment, just entirely *aware* of Dream standing right behind him. The hug was hiding right behind this door, and George couldn’t stand it, could barely keep himself together as he finally slid the key into the lock and turned it.

George had expected it would be him to reach for the embrace first, all needy and hungry and touch starved, but Dream surprised him. The second the door was open, Dream gently walked them

inside, threw his bags down, spun George around, and wrapped his entire lanky form around George.

George felt so small next to this huge imposing man, but for once, that didn't bother him. He trusted Dream, probably more than almost anyone, and there was no malice here. Dream wouldn't use his size against him.

George relaxed into Dream, wrapping his arms as far around his friend's torso as he could. It felt good. When was the last time he had been held at all, let alone like this?

Then it hit him.

Oh God, he wasn't going to be able to stop them...

The first tears started to sting at his eyes, and he let out a choked, "Dream?"

"I got you." Without any visible effort, Dream lifted George from the ground, walked them both to the couch, and gently set himself down, with George curled around him. In the end, George was laying across Dream's lap, sidesaddle, with his arms wrapped around him, while Dream held him in return.

It slammed into him like a truck. The tears, which had choked him up before, were now pouring down his face unbidden, more than he ever imagined could be held inside him.

And they just wouldn't stop.

He couldn't stop them.

It was actually super embarrassing, but Dream said nothing, and did nothing but gently pet George's back.

At one point, somewhere in the middle, George managed a strangled, "Your... hoodie..."

And Dream just shushed him softly.

~~~

Finally, George was running out of sobs. The tears themselves still came, but they didn't wrack his entire body with shivers and shudders so much. It was only then that George felt Dream's body twitch beneath him.

George lifted his head slowly, cautiously, like if he moved too fast, Dream would disappear, only to find his friend quietly sobbing through tight shut eyes.

"Oh Dream..." George murmured, wrapping himself around him tighter.

"What...?" Dream's voice was thready and thick.

"Are you alright?"

The arms around George got even tighter. "No... I don't think I am."

"I'm so sorry, Dream... I shouldn't... I didn't think..."

"No!" Dream cleared his throat, and his voice was a bit stronger. "No, George, it's not just about what happened to me. I mean, that is part of it, but I was just thinking of you, alone, in this huge apartment, just crying alone, and feeling like you couldn't tell anyone. It's been, what, like two weeks since it happened?" He paused for a moment. "I guess I was just thinking about how it would have been for me if I had been stuck alone like this, if my mom hadn't noticed."

"Well you're here now...?"

"I know, but I... I just wish I could have been here sooner." Dream chuckled for a moment. "You know, my mom actually held me like this too..." He sounded a little embarrassed.

George sat up. "Really?"

Dream's face was a little red, and he looked away sheepishly. "Yeah... She realized something was wrong and I'd been yelling and cursing, just being a huge ass. Suddenly, there was this look on her face, and she just grabbed me. I tried to push away, but then I was just sobbing in her arms, apologizing and blubbering. It was a mess."

George felt a lot better from hearing that. "That's how she knew how to put you in therapy?"

"Yeah. She said to me, 'I don't know what happened, and you don't need to tell me, but you do need to tell someone, so come with me.' She literally dropped me off at the place with no car, no phone, nothing, and told me she'd be back in an hour."

"Really?!" George couldn't help but giggle a little, imagining Dream standing in a therapist's parking lot, debating whether or not to go inside.

"Don't make fun of me!" Dream said, grinning from ear to ear, "Emotions haven't always been this easy for me."

"I'm not making fun of you. I was just thinking, 'Yeah, Dream is stubborn, that's basically the only way he'd do it.'"

"Shut *up*, George," but he was giggling.

"I am sorry for laughing, though. I mean, those events must have been just awful at the time."

"Yeah, they were, at the time. But therapy did make it possible to laugh. Not at the event, of course," Dream said, quickly, "but at the nonsense that happened all around it. I was just like you. I wasn't going to tell a soul. I bet you told yourself it 'wasn't that bad' or it 'wasn't a big deal' or whatever?"

"Mayyybee..."

"Exactly. But it was, George, clearly." He gestured to the actual lake his shoulder was swimming in.

George's hands flew to his mouth. "Ohmigod I am so sorry!"

Dream just laughed. "It's literally not even a problem, but clearly, you were affected by it. Right?"

After a huge, exasperated, frankly petulant, sigh, George agreed.

## Dreams and Nightmares

After the huge, very ridiculous (to George) outpouring of emotion, they were finally able to appreciate the fact that Dream was in George's flat. George took a moment to wash the evidence from the face and find a place to hang Dream's truly drenched hoodie, before finally giving his friend the tour.

The flat wasn't actually that large, though it wasn't small either, so it only took a few moments to show off. There was the main living room area, with a half wall that divided it from the kitchen (which was also a sort of bar with stools), a bathroom, and the two bedrooms. They quickly breezed past George's room, giving Dream barely a moment to glance inside the barren, barely decorated space, before they went to the room Dream would be staying in.

It was basically empty, just a bed (which George had made) and a single bedside table.

"Sorry, I guess I haven't really done much with it." The rest of the place, his mother had insisted on decorating, since he "had no taste." He reminded her that he was literally color blind, but she just hushed him and told him she would take care of the public spaces.

With the responsibility of private spaces left to him, he had done basically nothing. He wasn't even really sure what his living room looked like to other people, since he was pretty sure that she hadn't considered the colors for him (since he didn't care). It looked nice, though, so he didn't mind.

"You didn't really need to, I guess. Have you even had a guest here yet?" Dream giggled.

"I have!" George retorted, "But what's the point of decorating a place that people don't stay in long?" He wasn't actually mad, but come on, it was silly.

"Whatever you say, George, but I would have really appreciated a fully decked out shrine to me, or at *least* to our friendship."

"Oh shut up, Dream." He blushed a little bit at that. There was no shrine, but now that he could see Dream's face, there might have to be...

~~~

The rest of the evening was spent in peace, just hanging out and being friends, but in person. George did try the color blind glasses on, seeing his friend have more contrast and depth made him a bit heady. He also took a quick trip around his living room to reveal the secret shades there too, which he hadn't thought to do until he had company (until he had Dream...)

After that, Dream pulled out his laptop, and they started gaming, deciding not to stream and just to enjoy being able to be in each other's presence as they played. Sometimes, one would lightly punch the other while giggling uncontrollably. Sometimes, one would grip the other's shoulder for support. Once, Dream mussed up George's hair after a particularly impressive round.

~~Once, Dream got so close that George might have kissed him, but by the time he realized, Dream's face was gone.~~

At some point, they had takeout delivered, so entranced in what they were doing that they didn't even want to take a moment to cook something, and they ate while continuing to play, laughing as they made mistakes while trying to shovel food into their hungry mouths.

All in all, it was a wonderful way to spend the day. It felt like they had always been this close to each other, but now they were also physically close too. Their dynamic transitioned into the real world so well, that it was like they had always been like this.

It was a perfect evening.

But all perfection must end, and Dream started to yawn uncontrollably. He tried to push through, to keep playing, but it was apparent that the long flight and long day were really getting to him.

No matter how much George wanted to make Dream stay awake with him, he knew it wasn't possible. Plus, he was getting tired too. "I think we should call it a night, Dream."

"No, no, I'm okay! Just" *yawn* "one more round?"

"No, we really should go to bed. Besides, it's not like you're leaving tomorrow! We have time."

"I'm just having a" *yawn* "lot of fun!" Dream pouted.

"I know, and I am too, believe me, but we have to rest. It will be more fun tomorrow when you aren't yawning every third word."

"Fiiiiiiine." He dragged out the one syllable for at least a minute, with another yawn, before finally getting up from his position on the floor, stretching, and heading for his room. "Night, George."

"Night, Dream." George watched him, watched him stretch again, watched him slip out of the room. He sighed, and closed the door.

He hoped he didn't make noise when he slept.

~~~

The nightmares stayed at the edge of his consciousness, allowing him to get some good, peaceful sleep, for a while, but then *he* came for him again. George was running, dodging, jumping through an unfamiliar landscape, and Dylan was right behind him.

There was no escape, and, despite his very best efforts and his breathless, panicked push through the trees, an arm grabbed him and yanked him down. Hands all over, grabbing, touching, pulling... opening.

"No! Don't! Please! Just... Stop!" George fought, biting back screams and thrashing against the limbs that held him. "DREAM!"

George hadn't meant to say that, and the hands laughed at him. "Would he even want you now? Did he *ever* want you?"

He really wished he hadn't said that. Dylan had taken a lot from him, but he couldn't take Dream. George kicked the incomprehensible mass off of him and started to scramble away again.

He spent the rest of the night getting away and being caught again, but at least he got away, even if it took a long time sometimes.

~~~

Dream didn't like sleeping in new places. It was nothing against George, of course, as he had been nothing but hospitable and kind. Dream just didn't like adjusting to places that were unfamiliar. Too many variables, even if he trusted George with his life.

He would fall asleep eventually, and tomorrow would be easier, but he lay in the near darkness for a while, staring at the blank ceiling and waiting.

He finally dozed off, a fitful sleep with flashes of foreign walls, before he was awake again, and thirsty. He grumbled to himself, frustrated by this disruptive anxiety, and went to find a sink.

His room was right across from George's, and he couldn't help but get a little close, to check to see if his friend was sleeping okay.

At first, there were just the soft and gentle snores of George, with the occasional shifting on the bed, but then, there were grunts and groans and thrashing.

"No. No, don't!" His voice was sleep muffled, but the meaning was clear.

Dream wanted to wake him. He wanted to hold his hurting friend against his body and physically absorb all the pain, take it all away.

But Dream knew it probably wouldn't do him well to be woken up like that, especially by someone whose face he had seen for the first time literally half a day earlier. It tore at his heart, but dragged himself away from the door into the kitchen.

Somehow, it was easier for him to sleep after that. If he wasn't well rested, how could he possibly be there for George?

Glimpse of His World

The next morning, George got a text. He stared at his phone for a long time. He wasn't sure what to do with it, and it was so unexpected.

Text from Unknown: *I really liked the way you squirmed beneath me. You were so much fun to play with. Why do you keep blocking me? I know you want to go again.*

He was frozen in place, unable to keep from reading those *filthy* words over and over and over and over again.

After the disturbing nightmares last night, this was almost too much to take, but he couldn't pull his eyes away.

Why was Dylan doing this?

"George?" Dream called from just outside the door, "Are you awake yet?"

George quickly closed the app, trying to get the disgusting feeling out of his head. "Yeah, just give me a moment! I'll be right out."

He felt dead when walked into the kitchen, and he must have looked it, because Dream was by his side in a moment.

"George, are you okay?"

"I'm... I just..."

"Was it the nightmares?"

George looked up into his friend's big, worried eyes. "The what? How did you...?"

"Sorry, I wasn't snooping. I got up for water and I heard you... I didn't know what to do... I didn't want to wake you, in case that was worse, but... I... I'm sorry."

"No, no it's okay." This was the perfect excuse. Dream didn't need to know about the real reason.

"I understand. It's a weird position to be in, and I don't know how I would have handled being woken up. But yeah, that's what's got me shaken."

"I'm so sorry. Do... Do you want a hug?"

"Yeah, actually, I would."

This hug was a lot less needy than the one from yesterday, where they had basically been clinging to each other with desperation (especially George). It felt strangely intimate and calming. Just a loving embrace from a friend. George rested his head on the swell of Dream's chest and sighed.

It did make him feel better.

He shoved the vulgar text from his mind and let himself be at peace in the warmth and safety. There was no need to focus on anything else. He would not *allow* himself to focus on anything else. Dream was here, with him, and nothing else mattered.

Until Dream left again.

Dream's phone started buzzing on the table, over and over, but he was completely refusing to look at it, despite twitching every time it vibrated.

"You gonna answer that?"

"Um... That's actually something I wanted to talk to you about, but it can wait, since you just woke up and the nightmares and... everything."

"Dream, just tell me," George replied, rolling his eyes, "I'm not that fragile." Which was only slightly a lie.

"I don't think you're fragile at all! It's just not something you will probably want to talk about."

"Just tell me. It's okay."

"Well, first, um, if you have nightmares again, you are completely free to wake me up and... I mean, like, if lying next to me would help you sleep?"

The heat crashed into George's cheeks like a tidal wave. "Um...?"

"No, no, not like that!" Dream was blushing too, and he looked away in embarrassment. "Oh my God. I meant like, if you didn't want to be alone or whatever. Like just... The bed is big. I could even sleep on the floor. Just... I don't know. Forget I said anything."

"I'll, uh, I'll keep that in mind." It sounded nice to George, in theory, though there was a pit of anxiety about the whole thing.

"I mean, you could also not keep it in mind..." Dream muttered, embarrassed.

"No, it's a sweet gesture! Just no funny business, right?"

"Oh my god, no, no, absolutely not." Dream crossed his hands over his chest, a big X. "I would never even consider... No."

That did make George feel a bit better, and he let out a relaxed breath, untensing his shoulders. A crush was one thing, but he was not ready to do *that* with anyone, not even Dream.

There was a moment of awkward silence, and then George realized something. "You said, 'first?'"

"What?"

"When you started talking, you said, 'first,' which usually implies at least a 'second.'"

As if on queue, Dream's phone went off again, and his eyes darted to it.

"Is Dylan texting you?" He swallowed the "too" he had been about to say, for fear of revealing too much. His voice was quiet, calm. There was no shouting, no rage, just... a question.

"No! How would he have even...?"

"Then what? Dream, the suspense is killing me more than whatever it is you are hiding."

"It's Sapnap. He's been texting me like crazy."

"Oh. Right."

“Yeah. It seems like *someone* has barely been responding to text, and Sapnap is getting worried. He wants to know if I know what’s up, or if something is up.”

“Did you...?”

“No, George, of course I didn’t tell him, but that’s why I am ignoring my phone, because I don’t know what to tell him. He still thinks I am in Florida.

“I’m not ignoring him on purpose, I just... I don’t know what to say.”

“You know, it might be good if you told him.” Dream paused, before quietly adding, “All of it.”

“I really can’t do that...”

“Why not?!”

“He would just make fun of me.” George waved his hand dismissively.

“Do you really think he would do that? With something this serious?”

“I mean... I thought you would make fun of me too, honestly.”

“George!”

“What! It’s not because of what I think about you or Sapnap as people. It’s just... shameful.”

“It really isn’t, George, it really isn’t.” Dream started to turn away.

“No, please, Dream, that’s not what I meant. It’s not shameful when it happens to *other* people.”

“That doesn’t make sense...”

“I *know* it doesn’t make sense, and I am trying, I really am.” George takes a huge breath, trying to gather his thoughts. “I trust you guys. You know I do. I’m just... I’m scared. I don’t talk about these things with anyone. I don’t... share. This is a big leap.”

“I know,” Dream’s voice was barely a whisper, even as he got closer to George, suddenly hugging him. “I’m sorry. I don’t mean to push. But think of where Sapnap is on this. He *knows* something is wrong. He is *so* worried about you, but he has no idea what’s going on.”

“I’m sure he is, but...”

“Alright think of it this way. How would you feel if this had happened to him? If he had that happen to him, and he suffered, completely alone, without you or me to help, because he was afraid we would make fun of him? Imagine *knowing* something was wrong the *whole* time, but not knowing what it was or how to help?”

When Dream put it that way, it was a slap in the face. “Oh.”

“If you aren’t comfortable, you don’t have to tell him, honestly. But I really think you would feel better. And... I’ll tell him mine too, okay? If that would make it easier...”

“I’ll...” George’s face fell into his hands. Imagining this happening to Sapnap, to Dream, to anyone... There were, of course, people he would never, *could* never trust with something like this. But Sapnap? “I’ll tell him.” In his mind, he added, *eventually*.

~~~

Breakfast was relatively quiet, and Dream let it be, despite his usual penchant for filling space with sound. George had a lot to consider, they both did.

After they had eaten and everything was cleaned, George took Dream out on the town to see where he had grown up. Dream had insisted on being taken to places that meant something to George specifically, saying, "I can get a tourist's view of the place anytime I want. I came here to see you."

So George did just that. Instead of going to the Royal Pavilion or the Brighton Palace Pier, they went through the backroads to secret areas Dream would never have seen otherwise. They walked past all of George's schools, from primary to the local college (before he'd gone away to uni). They walked through tree laden paths with tiny babbling brooks until they got to the beach that George played at as a kid.

The entire time they walked, George was babbling away, in a way that he usually didn't, just showing his best friend this huge part of him, a part that could only really be experienced in person. He shared tidbits and stories about various random places, and gave Dream all the gossip on people he would never meet.

Dream could not have been happier. It wasn't that George never opened up, but he just wasn't one to talk without specific prompting. He couldn't help but feel happy as his friend just showed him the world he grew in. Dream imagined a tiny George, running down these paths with other anonymous children, giggling and laughing.

It filled his heart with warmth, and he felt a stupid grin spreading on his face.

"What?" George asked, suddenly interrupting himself.

"Hmm?"

"You're staring at me..."

"Oh!" Dream laughed, a nervous reaction. "I dunno. I just don't get to see you like this often, and it's nice. And there's something special about seeing your roots."

"Weirdo," George teases, with a huge grin on his face, "I didn't know you were such a sentimentalist."

Dream shrugged noncommittally, trying not to think about the depth of emotion he had just fallen into. "Sometimes, I guess."

"Whatever." George's eyes rolled, but he didn't actually stop the tour, and he didn't seem to mind Dream watching him.

~~~

When they got back to George's place, there was a new kind of closeness and connectedness, a

new layer that hadn't been there before. They knew almost everything about each other, but this trip was quickly stripping away the last separations between them, and they could both feel it.

"When I go to Florida, you'll have to give me the 'Dream tour!'" George announced as he closed the door behind them. They had been out so long that they had been able to watch a beautiful (for Dream) sunset as they made their way back, and it had become completely dark.

"When you come to Florida?" Dream asked, a little amused.

"Well, I just assumed..."

"Yeah, of course you're coming to Florida! It's just nice to hear you say it." Dream smiled and squeezed his friend's shoulder.

"Why must you torment me like this?" George whined sarcastically, dramatically throwing a hand over his eyes.

"Because you like it."

George cleared his throat and swiftly turned away, retreating into the safety of the apartment to hide his warming cheeks. "Yeah, sure, I do."

Dream let out a powerful wheeze, grabbing the wall for support. "Or maybe it's just because I like to mess with you."

"You're a terrible friend, you know that right?"

"First off, no I'm not. I'm actually the best. Second, you love me anyway."

"I don't actually." George was teasing back now, sticking out his tongue.

"It's okay, George, I know you do. I don't know why you pretend you don't like it."

Don't pretend you don't like it.

George fell into the wall, bracing himself as best he could as the memory hit him. "Don't... Don't use that phrase, please."

Dream was dancing in place, not sure what to do. "I'm sorry, George," he whispered, "I should have realized..."

"It's... I'll be fine. Just give me a moment."

The silence filled the room, and there was nothing but the soft half-pants of George trying to recover from the assault to his senses.

"Okay... Lights please?"

The lights flipped on with a brilliant flash, and Dream turned them all on, for good measure, but stayed as far away from George as he could, saying nothing.

After several deep breaths, George felt recovered and better. "Okay, whew, um... Dream, yes, I do... enjoy your company, but maybe let's not phrase it like that again?"

"Yeah, of course, got it! Sorry..."

“It’s okay.” George’s voice was small, but his smile was real, and it did make Dream feel a little better.

As they ate dinner together, the pit in each of their stomachs faded. George remembered how to laugh, and Dream started to feel better, like maybe he hadn’t made everything worse.

At one point, George reached over, put his hand on Dream’s, and whispered, “I really am glad you came out for me. It means the world.”

And with that, the pit was gone.

Confession

The nightmare was especially bad that night with new fodder from the text. The version of Dylan his brain was throwing at him had new words to say, new threats to make. He couldn't help but scream as he tore through a forest, trying to escape those taunts as they hit him, warming him up for what was coming.

He struggled. He fought. He tried so hard, but there was nothing he could do.

Then he was kidnapped, hidden up in the trees. Dylan's prize forever.

But Sapnap walked below, calling out his name. "GEORGE?! GEORGIE?! Where ARE you?"

Sapnap had no idea where to look. He didn't even know if he needed to be looking. George felt his heart rip to pieces as he watched Sapnap claw through leaves and branches, looking for him helplessly. He watched Sapnap start to cry.

"George, *please* . I'm sorry if you're mad at me or whatever, but please...!" His voice trailed off as he got too far away to hear.

George tried to call out to him as he disappeared beyond the tree line, but an evil hand wrapped around his face and yanked his head back.

"He doesn't care what you have to say." It told him, as it pulled him into the darkness.

~~~

George woke with a start, tangled in his sheets again. For a moment, he wanted to run to Dream's room, bang on the door, and demand comfort, but that just wasn't the person he was. Instead, he lay in the slowly brightening light of dawn, breathing heavily.

George faded out for a bit, letting himself sink into that secret void he had found since the incident, until the sun had fully risen, filling his room with a bright inescapable light.

The nightmare haunted him, though, and eventually, he picked up his phone, which he hadn't done in days.

There were so many messages, and most of them were from Sapnap, who was sure he had done something awful to piss George off.

The messages grew increasingly desperate, apologizing for the stream, the teasing, for demanding what was wrong instead of asking if George was okay. It had gotten to the point that Sapnap was apologizing for stuff that had been resolved long ago, just begging for *something* , some indication of what had happened.

George realized that Dream was completely right, of course he was. He hadn't intended to torment Sapnap like this, and it made him feel sick. He could try to assuage his friend's fears with more pretty lies, but that wouldn't work long term.

With a resigned sigh and shaky hands, he wrote: *I'm so sorry, Sapnap. I'm not really sure how to*

*explain over text. Let me know when you wake up, and I'll call you?*

“George?” came the tentative voice from outside.

“Yeah, Dream?”

“You sleep okay?”

George pulled the door open to a disheveled man, rubbing sleep out of his eyes. “Not really.”

“I kind of figured.” Dream said nothing about the offer he had made the day before, and George appreciated that. “I’m sorry, though. Well, what do you want to do today?”

“I decided I have to tell him.”

“Tell who? Tell them what?”

“Tell Sapnap about the... the thing.”

“Oh...”

“Can you help me? Just like, be on the call with me?”

“Of course, George.” Dream paused for a moment. “Hug?”

George didn’t even reply. He just barreled into Dream’s open arms, which rocked them both back a little until Dream caught them.

“I’ll take that as a yes,” Dream chuckled.

“Shut up.” George said, his voice muffled by his face pressed into Dream’s chest.

Dream just held him tighter.

~~~

George spent breakfast wound tight. It wasn’t fair to Sapnap to ignore him for days, and then expect an immediate reply in the early morning Texas time, but that didn’t stop him from checking his phone every few moments.

“Relax, George. I’m sure the second he wakes up, he will text you.”

“I know, I know, but I’m just so worried. How do I tell him? How do you even say something like this? It’s not something people usually talk about.”

“People do talk about it, I’m sure of it.”

“I just wish there was, like, a manual, or something.” George let his head fall into his hands, his breakfast half eaten and fully forgotten. “How to Tell Your Friends You Were...” He couldn’t even finish the sentence.

“Well, you don’t have to use the word. Sapnap isn’t stupid, he can figure it out through context clues.”

“I’m sure he can, but I don’t want to explain anything at *all* .”

Dream reached out to put a hand on George’s shoulder, but George’s eyes were still hidden beneath his palms, so the hand kind of awkwardly fell away. “Do... Do you want me to tell him for you?”

George’s head shot up. “No! Absolutely not! That would be worse.”

“Well I can be there with you at least, okay?” With George’s eyes on him again, Dream felt comfortable reaching out and squeezing his shoulder.

George leaned into it immediately. “Thank you.”

As if on queue, George’s phone buzzed with a notification.

GEORGE! Oh my God, I was so worried! Are you okay?! You can call me right now, dude.

George’s finger hovered over the call button for what felt like a long time. Finally, he saw movement in the corner of his vision. Dream’s open palm lay on the table between them. Without a moment of hesitation, George grabbed the hand with his own, drinking in Dream’s encouraging and supportive smile.

He hit the call button.

Sapnap picked up on the second ring. “George! Oh my GOD, dude. Is everything okay? Have I finally apologized enough?”

“I’m so sorry, Sapnap. It wasn’t like that at all. See something... Something happened. I wasn’t handling it well, and I’m not sure if I am handling it yet, but I want to talk to you about it.”

“Okay... What’s going on?”

“Alright, I know this is going to be... weird, but Dream and I have something to tell you. Something serious.”

“Ohhhh... So, you guys are finally dating, huh? Did all the fanfiction finally turn you, or did you figure it out on your own?”

“WHAT?!” Dream howled, trying not to die from the level 5 wheeze that took over his entire body.

“Um, no, Sapnap, that’s not at all why we are here. But I guess it’s good to know you would support us?” He said it sarcastically, but it was actually good to know that, and George filed it away for later.

“Except I literally just heard Dream in the background? So he is clearly at your house, since he’s not,” he paused while he checked, “yeah, he’s not on the call. So what happened?”

“Well...” The words stuck in George’s throat, and he couldn’t even begin to say anything. He didn’t know how to do this! He hadn’t even told Dream, or even confirmed that it had happened! How was he supposed to directly inform Sapnap?

“Let’s start with why is Dream *in your house*. How in the hell did that happen?”

“Um... That’s the thing... This hugely bad thing happened a couple weeks ago, and I... wasn’t handling it well. Dream kind of figured it out.”

“So, he just dropped everything and flew to England?” Sapnap paused again, apparently thinking it

over. “Oh... Oh God. What happened George? It must have been bad if Dream would...”

“Yeah, I guess it was pretty bad...”

Sapnap’s voice was suddenly soft. The power and energy stripped away to be gentle in a way that George almost never heard. “Are you okay?”

“I’m...” A single tear leaked out of his eye, tracing its way down his cheek, though he wished it hadn’t. He felt a soft squeeze in his hand, and he smiled at Dream, mouthing, *Thank you*.

“I’m not okay, Sapnap,” he continued, voice breaking slightly, “which is why Dream flew out.”

Sapnap waited patiently for George to gather himself, afraid if he interrupted, George would never tell him.

“Remember that date I went on? Like two weeks ago?”

“Yeah, she rejected you.”

“It wasn’t exactly that...” Another long pause stretched between them, insurmountable and silent, until finally, “*He* didn’t exactly reject me...”

Sapnap’s mouth audibly popped open, leading George to think he had been joking about him and Dream dating. “So, you were afraid to come out to me...?”

“Um, well, that’s part of it...?” This was completely impossible. “Not like actually afraid, but just... I just didn’t, I guess? But the bigger issue is... Do you remember the donation from...” George’s voice stuck in his throat. He couldn’t say that name out loud.

Dream, who had been quietly letting George handle this alone save from the occasional supportive squeeze, quietly interjected, “From Dylan.”

George’s body seized at the name.

“Yeah, I remember... Something about wanting to do it again? And then you got mad at us for teasing, right?”

“Right...” How was he meant to do this? “Um, well, theoretically, what if I had slept with this... person, but like not... Like...” He was fidgeting now, like he would be able to find a seated position that would magically allow the words to come out.

Dream’s hand was warm in his. He closed his eyes and focused on that, on Dream’s slow, calm breaths, on *Dream* in his house, here to support him.

Sapnap remained absolutely silent, which was helpful, albeit very strange.

“What if I hadn’t wanted to, and then it... happened anyway... And then... he sent that message.... To...” George couldn’t keep going, as the tears were falling again, full force, two rivers down his cheeks.

The sound of the chair dragging across the floor forced George’s eyes back open, and he saw Dream offering him a hug. He accepted immediately, crawling into his friend’s lap, his friend’s arms, into Dream. He just curled into a ball and Dream held all of him.

After a few more minutes of silence, Sapnap realized nothing more was going to be said, and he finally replied, with at least one voice break, “Oh. George did he... He... made you...? And the

message... Oh fuck, I'm so, so, *so* sorry, George. If I had known..."

By the time he replied, George had managed to pull himself together enough to speak again. The tears were still silently falling, but slower. "How could you have known? You didn't even know I was going on a date with a *man*, and I told you it was a rejection, which is kind of the opposite."

"Yeah, but... still. Of course you would be angry by that kind of teasing around a message like that..." The sound of his mouth popping open and closed a few times crackled through the speaker, before Sapnap finally managed to get the question out. "But Dream knows? Like, he didn't react when you said it. I was expecting a WHAAAAT?!"

Sapnap did a pretty good impression of Dream, but Dream ignored it, and just replied, "Yeah, but he didn't exactly tell me. Dylan," George twitched, still in Dream's lap, "sent me some donos, and I kind of figured it out."

"Wait this dude went into *your* stream to fuck with George? I might need to fly up there and kick this guys ass! The first step was too far, but this stupid fucking bitch just kept going!"

"I appreciate the offer, but I don't know if that would actually be helpful," George murmured.

"Besides, if that was something George wanted, I can do it myself."

George allowed himself to glance up at Dream's perfect face. Dream wasn't really looking at anything, just staring out into the kitchen from his chair, absentmindedly running his hand up and down George's back. George could see it in his eyes, though. Dream would kill Dylan if asked.

Not that George wanted something *that* serious and permanent, of course not, but it was nice to be supported. He cuddled back into the broad, protective chest in front of him.

"Still, George, if you need me to throw hands or help in anyway, please let me know okay?" Sapnap said, leaning back in his chair.

"I will definitely keep it in mind."

"But wait, how come Dream figured it out anyway?" Sapnap wondered, "Were the donos that explicit?"

George sat up again, adjusting his position so he could be one hugging Dream. "You don't have to tell him," he whispered, right into Dream's ear, so quiet that he wasn't sure he had heard it.

Dream let out an involuntary shudder, that George honestly didn't understand, and whispered back, "No, it's okay. It's time."

"Well, Sapnap," Dream started, managing about the same pace as George had.

Sapnap waited quietly and patiently.

"I had a... girlfriend once who... Um..."

George was surprised by how hard it was for Dream to get the words out, especially after he had just admitted what had happened between him and Dylan.

Thankfully, Sapnap understood. "Oh, so you, like, got it because you had been there?"

"Yeah..."

“Wow, that’s... That’s a lot, guys. I’m so sorry both of you were dealing with that, but I’m glad you have each other. And you have me too! I don’t know exactly what it’s like, but I love you guys, and I’ll do anything I can, okay?”

“We love you too, Sapnap,” Dream said, leaning into George a little.

“Speak for yourself!” George teased, before adding, “No, I’m kidding. I love you, Sapnap.”

“Awwww! Georgie loves me! He finally admitted it!”

“What are you talking about? I say it all the time off cam,” George huffed.

“I know, but... It just means a lot that you guys trusted me with this. It feels real.”

“It is real,” George murmured, and it meant a lot that it came from him.

After the serious discussion was out of the way, they started chatting amicably. It was a little awkward at first, and every once and a while, a sadness would creep into Sapnap’s voice, but they quickly fell into the rhythm of things again. George wasn’t one to talk about his feelings much, they all knew that, and what he really wanted was to just be with his friends and not have to think about that terrible evening for a while. His friends seemed just fine with that.

Just having shared what had been wrong made it so much easier for things to be normal with them. They didn’t handle George with kid gloves, but there was an understanding. Light roasting only, and when George started to get frustrated, they stopped immediately. It was amazing how easy it was to accommodate, and George felt a little silly for wallowing for so long (though he still couldn’t believe he had managed to tell them).

At some point, later into the discussion, George suddenly realized that he had never left Dream’s lap. He had simply stayed there, wrapped around his friend’s warm body, and then forgotten, like it was a normal thing to do. Dream didn’t say anything about it. In fact, he kept running soothing fingers across George’s back, a touch so light that it almost wasn’t there, but it was reassuring. George was sure he would have felt trapped by such an embrace, but he didn’t. He knew that the moment he tried to stand, Dream would let him go.

But he didn’t want Dream to let him go.

~~~

After hours and hours on the phone, well into the dead of night, they all agreed it was time for bed. When the call ended, George finally hopped up off Dream’s lap, and Dream immediately dashed for the bathroom, full speed.

George sheepishly realized that Dream must have had to go for a while. As he stood, his own need grew, but he had been resting on Dream’s torso, so it must have been worse for him.

When Dream exited the bathroom, a little breathless still, but looking relieved, George felt a bit guilty.

“You know, if you had to go that bad, you could have told me. I would have gotten off of you,” he said, as he passed Dream to use the bathroom himself.

“Yeah, I know you would have, but I didn’t want to stop holding you yet.” Dream’s eyes went wide, and he quickly added, “You know, cause I’m sure you still needed the comfort!”

“Right,” George said, completely missing (or ignoring) the subtext, “well, thank you for that. It was really nice.” *It was the most comfortable and safe I have felt in a long time*, his brain corrected.

“Um, George...”

“Yeah?”

“Just know, I meant it... I know you have been having nightmares, and if being next to me would help... All you have to do is ask, okay?”

“Okay. Thank you.” George gave him a soft smile, trying to hide the absolute giddiness currently pouring into him. It might be inappropriate to take this much physical comfort from someone who was a) just a friend and b) that George had a crush on, but he was feeling a little selfish and needy. It felt like this week wasn’t real, and he had the freedom to tell people things and do whatever he wanted.

Well, not *whatever* he wanted, but pretty close.

# Disturbed Sleep

## Chapter Notes

Hey, just so you know, this chapter features an act of violence, someone being triggered, and both happening while someone is asleep.

The nightmares did come, as they had every night for the last couple weeks, but that night, he was almost relieved when he woke up from one, clutching his sheets in the dark. He would have, of course, preferred none at all, but at least now he had someone to help with them.

He was so confident as he straightened himself out, threw open the door, and marched across the hallway, but when he got to the door, all pretense of conviction drained out of him. The door was hugely imposing and shut tight, and he would have to make the first step. He would have to *ask* for what he wanted.

George stood in front of that door for a long time. Sure, Dream had offered to guard him while he slept if he had nightmares, but actually doing it felt too weird to describe. Friends comforted friends by cuddling all night, right? It was fine, right?

He might have debated for the rest of the night, until the sun's rays finally just convinced him to stay awake on only a few hours of sleep, but (thankfully) Dream saved him from that.

"Oh my God, George," he teased, "I heard your door open and I heard you shuffle over here. Just come in please, so I can go back to sleep?"

George almost left at his tone, too embarrassed at being caught in indecisiveness and need, but then the door was thrown open, and Dream stood there, a little disheveled from being in bed.

"Wait! I'm sorry for teasing you! I realized it was too much when I said it, but I do mean it. Let me keep you safe tonight, okay?"

"Okay." George's voice was so small as he carefully followed Dream into the dark room, a single shaft of moonlight the only illumination. It played tricks on Dream's face, and he was so beautiful it almost hurt.

Maybe this was a mistake.

But then Dream was in the bed, welcoming him, and he couldn't resist. He slipped under the sheets and pulled the blankets over him, sealing him in. They didn't touch, but he could hear the soft breathing behind him, someone he trusted, and he felt a bit better.

Dream fell back asleep immediately, clearly having no issues with George next to him, and that made George feel a little better too. This was completely normal and fine, and George's heart was *not* soaring and telling him to confess his love by the light of the moon. That would be ridiculous.

So he didn't say anything. He just curled into the bed, and let his heavy eyes fall shut, using Dream's semi-regular snoring as a focus so he could drift off.

~~~

Dream wasn't a heavy sleeper, but he could sleep through a lot. He had been raised in a big enough city, and he was from Florida. There were a lot of things a man from a city in Florida could ignore.

George was not one of them.

The second the small whine left his throat, Dream was wide awake. Tiny groans and fear sounds started coming from his bedmate, and George started twitching. Moaning turned to mumbling turned to words. "No... Don't!... I'm... Stop!..." George was fighting by that point, fighting the sleep paralysis to physically hit an apparition.

Dream didn't know what to do.

"Please..." George begged to nothing. "*Please...*" he repeated, more insistent.

"George?" Dream said quietly, wondering if that would help.

The nightmare was clearly getting worse now, and expressions of fear, horror, disgust, and terror rippled across George's sleeping face. His hands were tangled in the sheets, clutching them with a white knuckled grip. "Please..." His voice was a whisper, and it barely made it past his lips, but it stabbed Dream in the heart.

Dream reached out and gently touched George's shoulder, and everything exploded.

George SCREAMED, an honest to goodness scream, just like the ones he did in videos, and launched himself up. Before Dream could even react, George punched him in the gut.

"Fuck..." he groaned. That had really hurt.

A leg kicked out, catching Dream's hip, but it wasn't well aimed. Then George was pounding his fists on Dream's chest, and he got the picture. The blows weren't really hard, but the intent was clear. Without touching George again, Dream scooted backwards on the bed until he could roll off, landing in the foot of space between the wall and the mattress (thank goodness the bed wasn't against the wall!). Once he was out of George's sleepy reach, on the ground, he quickly crawled away from the bed, to stand by the window. The sun was just starting to rise, and he hoped that George would see him in the light and realize who he was.

George cautiously reached forward, eyes still closed, but his hand found nothing but empty air. He started to pitch forward, which made Dream want to rush over and catch him, but he wasn't sure if that was a good idea.

Thankfully, George woke up as he started to fall, and caught himself on the wall. He was panting slightly, and completely ruffled from the tossing and turning and fighting.

His wild eyes scanned the room, desperately searching until he found, "Dream?"

Dream tried so hard, so very hard to hide it from his face, but George knew something was wrong immediately.

"Why are you...?" George was kneeling on the bed, sheets and blankets tangled around his calves. He fell back, his butt hitting his legs. Then he must have felt it, the leftover throbbing that beat through the side of his fists. He looked down and his hands, opening and closing them. "I

didn't..."

Dream could lie, especially because it wouldn't help him to know in the slightest, but he couldn't actually lie to George. "It's okay, George. It happens sometimes."

"I *hit* you?" George gasped, voice breaking.

"Only a little...?"

"What the fuck...?" George whispered dejected, eyes still tracing every line of his hands, as if he would be able to read them.

"It's okay! I reached out to wake you, and I think I made it worse."

"It doesn't matter! I shouldn't have hit you!" George finally looked up, eyes tracing the tall man hunched against the wall under a single shaft of light. "Are you alright?"

"Yes, just a bit startled, honestly. You only got one really good one in."

"Where?"

"What?"

"Where did I hit you?" He asked again, quietly, gently like Dream was a startled rabbit. George was shaking a little, but he was clearly trying to keep together for the injured party.

Had Dream looked that scared? Or was it just George's anxiety? "Here," Dream replied, pointing to a spot to the left of his belly button.

George untangled himself from the bedding and stood on wobbling legs. "Can I see?"

Dream's cheeks flushed immediately. He had no doubts that George had zero sexual intentions, but the thought of showing him made him shiver. *No!* he yelled at himself, *Now is not the time!*

Despite his internal war, he nodded once, figuring George wouldn't let it go until he saw it, to know the exact severity of the damage.

George's shaking became visible to Dream, as he walked towards the man he had just punched. Both of them knew that George would never hit anyone, especially not Dream, on purpose, but still George acted like Dream would be skittish.

A long, thin arm reached out, crossing the full distance between them, and touched the hem of Dream's sleep shirt. "Can I... lift?"

Dream swallowed. "Yeah."

Inch by inch, the shirt peeled back, revealing the soft skin of his stomach and the light happy trail that chased itself into his pants. If George noticed these things, he mentioned nothing of it to Dream (but he was noticing, and holding his breath so as to not make a sound). Finally, the mark was revealed. A huge red splotch just above the highest point of the left pelvic bone.

"Oh." was all George could say, and he couldn't seem to take his eyes away, Dream assumed out of shame (but there was a healthy dose of wanting there too).

George looked up, and their eyes met for a moment, and it was a lot. Dream realized how close he was, how intimate it was, despite the injury. George must have realized it too, because he let the

hem slip through his fingers and turned away.

“George, wait!”

“No, I need to get something. I’ll be back, okay?” he tossed over his shoulder as he slipped out the bedroom door.

Dream was left, standing in the fading moonlight, cheeks absolutely cherry red. Sometimes, it was good that George was colorblind, so he wouldn’t know how much that had affected him. George hadn’t even *touched* him, but Dream was tingling.

It was weird to admit after the reason that Dream had come out here, and after George had just attacked him, but Dream felt really... good. Was that allowed?

After a few minutes, George returned with a bundled up towel. “Ice pack,” he explained, holding it out for Dream.

“Oh. Of course.” For a while, he just kind of looked at George’s hand, before finally gathering himself to take it. He was careful to not touch George at any point, but he hoped it went unnoticed. The ice pack was cold against his skin, even with the towel, and his breath hissed in through his teeth.

“I’m still so sorry, Dream...” George reiterated quietly. He started to leave the room.

Dream didn’t want that, despite the bruise forming on his abdomen. “George, wait! Please, it was an accident.”

George paused at the door for a moment, then asked quietly, “Would a hug make it better?” then even quieter, “or worse?”

“Better,” was his immediate reply.

Despite this clear support, George moved at a snail’s pace, haltingly turning and weaving back over to Dream.

“Would a hug make it better or worse for you?” Dream worried.

“Better.” George’s was as fast as Dream’s had been.

“Okay, good.” Dream held his arms out for George, but, instead of sinking into Dream like he had before, George pulled Dream’s head down to his chest. Dream let himself be pulled, sinking to his knees in surprise. George wrapped one arm around Dream’s head, the other around his shoulders and cradled him there.

Fuck it felt good to be held like that.

“I’m so sorry I hit you,” George murmured, stroking Dream’s hair lightly.

“You literally had a nightmare,” Dream mumbled into George’s shirt.

“I still didn’t want to hit you...”

“I know you didn’t.”

George mindlessly ran his fingers through the soft waves for a long time, before finally whispering, “I’ll look into therapy tomorrow.”

“That sounds like a good plan.”

Turning Point

Chapter Notes

Another hateful, disgusting text from Dylan in this chapter, FYI.

The next morning, George woke up in his own bed, alone. Dream had insisted that it was okay for George to try again, practically begged him to stay, but George couldn't bear it. He had *hit* Dream. Sure, he had been literally sleeping and having a very violent nightmare, but what the hell was that? That was the last thing he wanted to do!

But there was another problem too. A problem discovered by dim moonlight and a snatch of skin. George wanted *more*. He knew he wasn't even *ready* for more, but having Dream this close, this caring and supportive, this *good* was too much. He wanted to be touching him always.

That wasn't reasonable or controlled of him, so to his own bed he went. After a long time of holding him, petting his hair, feeling him nuzzle into his chest and tummy, George let Dream go. There was a whine, but it surely couldn't have been from Dream.

"I think it's time to take the ice pack off," George said, "and I should be getting back to bed."

"George, you don't need to go."

"But I do."

George could see how much Dream wanted to fight him, to convince him to stay, but he wanted even more for George to feel safe, so George left, ice pack in hand, regretting every step.

His bed was so empty that morning. Why did he have to ruin *everything*?

He was getting a pretty good mope going when the smell of cooking meat wafted under the door. The temptation to ignore it and sink into a good, old-fashioned pit of despair was strong, but his stomach was stronger. With one actually painful growl, his stomach told him in no uncertain terms that he would be eating this food as soon as it was available.

With a groan, he was out of bed, following the mouthwatering aroma of breakfast.

"Good morning!" Dream said, with a little too much cheer.

"Morning..." George replied, "You're cooking?"

"Yeah, last night was hard, so I figured we could use a good meal!"

"I punched *you*. If anyone should be cooking, it's me."

"Don't worry about it! It's almost done, anyway. Besides, I imagine you didn't get much more sleep..." Dream's voice trailed off.

That was true enough. "You're being far too accommodative of me, especially considering that I hit you last night."

“Well, considering how much you have beaten yourself up over it, I would say we’re even by now,” Dream commented, “Besides, I came out here to help you. Healing is messy.”

“Did it bruise?”

“I’m *fiiiiine*. It’s tender, but it will heal and I will live.” Dream turned away from the stove, locking eyes with him, before saying, “George, I forgave you before you even woke up, so you can forgive yourself too.”

“I’ll consider it,” he replied.

Dream rolled his eyes, but went back to cooking.

When his back was turned, George whipped out his phone and texted Sapnap. *Help! I accidentally punched Dream in the stomach while I was having a nightmare and I feel really bad. What do I do?*

The reply came quickly, which meant that Sapnap was up late again. *Was Dream even mad about it?*

No, but I hit him!

If Dream isn’t mad, then there is no problem. Knowing you, you’ve already apologized more than enough. It’s not like you did it on purpose, right?

No, I was sleeping.

Oh my God, dude, you are hopeless. Don’t freak out about something you did while literally sleeping, please. Everything is fine. Now, I’m going to bed.

Night, Sapnap. And after a moment of consideration. *Thank you. That does make me feel better.*

“Texting Sapnap to make sure it’s *really* okay that you sleep hit me?” Dream teased, setting a huge plate of food in front of George.

“Shut *up*,” George said, hiding his face as he blushed, “That’s not what I was doing.”

“Thought so. Tell him I said hi.”

“Well, actually, he’s just gone to bed,” George replied without even thinking. His head sank deeper into his hands, covering the now growing pool of heat in his cheeks. “Oh my God.”

Dream just laughed.

~~~

After breakfast, George excused himself to his room. He thought about hiding what he was doing, but Dream would be happy to know, so he said, “Hey, I’m going to see if I can’t set up some therapy right now, alright?”

Dream beamed. “Awesome. Good luck. If you need me for moral support, I’m there.”

“Thank you.”

The call went really well. The woman who answered, Gina, was very sweet and they worked together to find someone who would work well with George. He was a little vague about the issue, but he gave her enough details that she would hopefully find someone helpful for him.

“Actually, you’re in luck! Dr. Harper had someone cancel a consultation today. Can you come in at 2?” Gina asked.

“Um, let me check. Give me a moment.” He put his hand over the receiver and wandered around until he found Dream lounging on the couch, scrolling through his phone. “Hey Dream,” he asked, “they have an appointment today.”

“They have appointments on weekend days?”

“It’s Monday, so yeah...”

“It’s Monday?!”

George sighed. Dream left tomorrow night, but he was trying not to think about it. “Yeah, which is why I want to wait. I don’t want to miss a single second with you if I can, let alone a whole consult!”

Dream put his phone down. “George, I would love it if you went today. Yes, we will not have that hour, but I want you to do good things for yourself. Plus, I would literally go with you and sit in the waiting room until you get out. How does that sound?”

George couldn’t help but smile. “That would be alright, I guess.”

“Then it’s settled!” and he relaxed back into his phone.

*I love this man*, George thought, despite himself. Thank God it was just a thought and not out loud.

“Hey, sorry for making you wait Gina,” George said, sliding back into his room, “Today at 2 pm works great.”

~~~

The appointment was still a few hours away, so they elected to stay in for a while, mindlessly watching some movies. At first, they naively sat across the couch from each other, as if they weren’t going to touch. Neither of them knew who started it, or how it happened, but, suddenly, they were shoulder to shoulder, thigh to thigh. It was so bizarre! And it was even more bizarre when, somehow, George ended up curled into Dream’s chest. Wouldn’t you know, it happened again, and Dream was petting George’s black hair, while George’s thumb ran across Dream’s knuckles as he held his hand. It was unexplainable, surely, but they decided to go with it.

It felt right.

At the end of the movie, George picked up his phone. His eyes went wide, and the phone clattered to the floor.

“George?” Dream asked, “are you alright?”

The happy, relaxed cuddle they had found themselves in was shattered, and George was standing,

rigid, at the foot of the couch.

“George, please, what’s wrong...?”

“He... He... The... Message,” George panted, gripping the couch.

Dream picked up George’s phone. It was still unlocked, and the message lay there, like an image of a rotting carcass.

Text from unknown: *GeorgeNotFound is right! Why won’t you reply to me? Maybe it’s because you know my secret? That I’m not actually gay, I just like showing little bitch boys their place? You want me to show you again?*

The previous message from the same number showed up in the message chain, and it made Dream sick and enraged at the same time.

George was shaking again, and backing away from the phone. “Get rid of it,” he mumbled.

“The text or the phone?”

“Both! Either! Just, please?”

“Yeah, I’ll take care of it, George, of course. Just... go get ready for your appointment. When you come back, the message will be gone, and I’ll block him, too.”

George nodded numbly and disappeared into his room. The door closed so softly that Dream wondered if it had actually been closed at all.

Dream did exactly as he said he would. He deleted the text and blocked the number, but he did save it to *his* phone, and he used his knowledge of phones to extract the original number to his phone too. This was the last fucking straw.

Therapy

Chapter Notes

This chapter includes a scene in a therapist's office in detail, fyi.

George was still a little shaky when he came back out, but knowing Dream had taken care of it made it much easier. It was embarrassing knowing that he had seen what Dylan had said, but Dream didn't judge.

"Would a hug be better or worse right now?" Dream asked as soon as George came back out.

"Better." George sank into it gratefully.

After a moment just savoring the embrace, George whispered, "Does this make it worse?"

"Does what make it worse?"

"His text? About... being gay." George was so quiet that Dream almost didn't hear.

"I don't think it matters either way. His sexuality has nothing to do with what he did. It wasn't about sexuality. It was about power. That's not a reflection on you, it's on him. Straight or gay, he is a r--"

"Please don't say the word," George interrupted.

"Yeah, sorry... But you get what I mean."

"Yeah, I think I do..." And it did make him feel a little better, even if he couldn't quite believe it yet.

~~~

The therapist's office was in the center of town, which wasn't too far off. George drove while Dream directed poorly. He kept getting distracted by talking to George, and they got a little lost a few times. It didn't help that they couldn't stop laughing. It had been a hard morning, but if there was one thing Dream could do, it was make George laugh, and that's really what he needed. Especially to break the tension around meeting a new therapist.

Dream occasionally texted someone, but George barely even registered it. Probably just Sapnap and Dream planning a video or something.

They walked together into the office, Dream by his side for every step, just being there. It was immensely helpful.

Finally, George's name was called. Part of him wanted Dream to come in, but he knew that wouldn't work, especially since Dream was probably going to come up in some "more-than-just-

friends” ways.

The office itself was nice, and Dr. Harper was a kind, older gentleman who offered George a seat on a comically large and cushioned couch. He was worried that he wouldn’t be able to talk, but with everything that had happened, and Dr. Harper’s energy, it was pouring out in seconds. He gave the doctor a scene by scene account of the last few weeks, starting with the incident, through his week of isolation, and then Dream.

It was embarrassing how much he lit up when he talked about Dream. He found himself meandering down cute tangents and noting small details with a wistful smile. He was gushing like someone with their first crush in secondary school, and he had to actually stop himself by saying, “I can’t believe this. I came here to talk about this hugely terrible event, but I’m just talking about Dream.”

Dr. Harper replied, “Well, I think the reason for that is that you don’t want to talk about the assault. You want to talk about the happy things! And that is completely understandable, and I honestly encourage it for a first session. Obviously it will be good to unearth what this traumatic incident has done to you, but we just met, what, forty minutes ago? It’s hard to talk about deep things with someone you just met, and I want you to be comfortable here. Talk about whatever you like.” He ended it with an easy going smile.

George already felt surprisingly at ease. “I guess, I just worry, you know? Like I know I am not ready for anything right now, but I really feel something for Dream, and it’s just getting bigger and bigger. Isn’t that wrong though, considering what just happened?”

Dr. Harper thought for a moment, leaning back in his chair. “I don’t think it is ‘wrong.’ First, the brain grieves in a lot of ways. Finding comfort in a good friend is a completely healthy thing to do, as long as it is a mutual give and take. It sounds like you are in more of a take space right now, but there have been times where you have been the one to give, right?”

“Yeah, I suppose so...”

“As for the feelings, it sounds like those have been there for a while. I think the first time you met Dream in person, no matter the circumstance, you were going to have to explore all these feelings that you had been denying with distance. Couple that with the intensity of trauma, a shared trauma at that, and mutual support, and that is a powerfully forged bond. Would I recommend you leave my office and have sex with him tonight? No. But would I recommend letting this grow, being open to it, and seeing what happens? Absolutely. From what you’ve described, he’s a good guy. You’re not using him as a Band-Aid for what happened. You are bonding with someone you have known for years at an inopportune time.”

That did make George feel a lot better, honestly, but... “I just don’t want to be someone who uses someone else to heal. It’s not fair to him. Especially since I am apparently hurting him...”

“Hitting someone in their sleep once isn’t ‘hurting him.’ I wouldn’t recommend attacking him again, but that’s something that will come from healing. I don’t think it *will* happen again, because both of you learned from it, and you have time to work through these things. As for “using someone to heal,” George, that’s what being human *is*. The way that humans heal is through socialization. Trauma happens, but PTSD comes from isolation, from a lack of community, and from fear. I wouldn’t expect you to make Dream a therapist for you, that would be too much, but that’s what I’m here for. I take the heavy stuff away, and then he can be your friend. Does that sound reasonable?”

“Yeah, it really does... Thank you, Doctor.” George smiled, sinking back into the couch and

feeling comfortable. It was getting easier to tell people.

With what was basically permission from his therapist, he used the rest of the session to talk about Dream. Sometimes, he would tie what he was talking about back to his interactions with Dylan, without even realizing it, and he and his therapist learned a lot.

At the time up, George honestly felt a lot better. It was a good first session, and they scheduled the next for the following week.

George left feeling good. He walked back into the waiting room, ready to gush to Dream about how good an idea therapy was, but Dream wasn't there. He looked around, confused, wondering where he could have gone, when Dream skidded into the entryway.

He was panting, his chest heaving with the effort of breathing, and his eyes were a little wild. He looked like he had just done a real life manhunt. ~~It was kind of hot.~~

"Hey George, sorry about that," he gasped.

"Hey Dream, you alright?"

"Yeah, come on! I'll tell you about it in the car."



# Player versus Player

## Chapter Notes

PLEASE BE WARNED: There are graphic depictions of blood and violence in this chapter. If you do not want to read that, there will be a summary at the bottom with a toned down version of what happened. <3

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream had texted Dylan before they even left the house. He wasn't sure how George would feel about his plan, so he just kind of didn't say anything. After pulling the number, he stared at the digits, debating whether or not to go through with it, but the hour of George in therapy seemed like something too perfect to ignore. When else would he have this opportunity?

So Dream sent him a message with the temp phone he had gotten for the trip.

*Hey Dylan, it's George. I'm so sorry for not responding sooner. My phone broke and I had to get a new one. I miss you... You want to meet up today? I'd love to squirm for you. ;)*

Dream didn't expect a reply, honestly. It seemed silly to even expect. I mean George couldn't have been more clear, with all the blocking and his angry reply on stream. There was no way Dylan would fall for this, right?

**Text from Assface:** *Heyyyy George. I was wondering where you had gone. So eager for me. You want to meet up today?*

Dream couldn't believe it, but he ran with it. Maybe it was fate?

*Yeah, I don't think I can wait anymore. Please?*

Dream texted back and forth with him as George got ready and as they drove to the therapist's office. Mostly he was flirting, trying to encourage Dylan to actually show up, but there was also planning. He set it up so that they would meet a short walk away from the office George was going to. They would meet in an alley, because Dream had said he wanted to do something naughty just out of everyone's line of sight. The meetup was really close to when George was supposed to be done with his appointment, so hopefully they would be long gone before any police could stop him, in case it came to that (which it would).

By the time George went into his appointment, Dylan was riled up. Every other minute, Dream's phone would buzz with another thing he wanted to do, another filthy secret. It was too easy, and Dream knew just what to say. He leaned into innocence and shock. He would lead Dylan into him, and then close off, as if he wasn't quite sure.

Dylan was very into it, which only made Dream sick.

Finally, it was time to start walking over. They had decided to meet in an alley Dream had found on Google Maps. It was next to a restaurant, and it was deep. It was the perfect place for what Dream wanted to do.

He slipped out of the office, not sure if he wanted someone to notice he was gone. If possible, he

didn't want George to know, but if he was gone when George came back... He would just have to hurry.

The walk there was nonchalant and calm. He kept his head ducked low and casually meandered towards the restaurant, scanning the crowd carefully and keeping an eye on exit paths.

The alley itself was nicer than the ones Dream was used to. There were still huge dumpsters and various boxes, but it just seemed cleaner, and it didn't smell like piss. The walls on either side were a red brick, and the sunshine made the place look rather cheery even. Alleys in Florida didn't look like this, at least not the ones in big cities.

The back of the alley was nice and dark though. Perfect for secret acts no one should see. A young man with white-blond hair was standing there, hiding in the shadows, staring at his phone, as if he was waiting for something.

Dream texted him, *I'm almost there!*, and hid behind the outside wall of the alley, peeking around to see his reaction.

The man smiled immediately and looked up with anticipation.

*Gotcha.* Dream thought.

Dylan's eyes fell back to his phone as he rapidly typed what Dream assumed was a reply, which was consistent with the buzz he felt as he approached. He walked slowly, keeping low and hiding behind the dumpsters until he was only a few feet away. It was exhilarating, a real life manhunt.

Dream popped out from behind the trash, making Dylan jump. "Hey there, are you Dylan?"

"Um, yeah, what's it to you?"

"Hey Dylan, I'm going to need you to leave George the fuck alone." Dream's voice was calm, light even, and he said it with a smile.

"Why would I do that?"

"Because I'm asking nicely. George hates your guts. Leave him alone." His voice became a little sterner, and he narrowed his eyes.

"Nah, I don't think I'm going to do that. He's a lot of fun." Dylan had the audacity to laugh.

"Although I suppose it was you I spent the day texting?"

"This is your last warning." There was no joviality to his tone now. He was just angry and trying to project threatening vibes.

"What are you going to do? Hit me?"

"Yes, actually." Dream dropped low and used the momentum to swing his fist into Dylan's stomach, right where George had hit him in his sleep, except he meant to do damage.

Dylan folded, clutching his gut and coughing. "What the fuck?" He groaned.

Dream grabbed the little weasel's head and slammed it into his knee, which actually hurt a lot, but it didn't stop him for a moment. Finally, before Dylan could do anything, he adjusted his leg, and kicked his foot in between Dylan's thighs.

Dylan collapsed like a telescope, immediately falling to his knees.

Dream grabbed his hair, yanking the man's head up as his nose started to bleed, dripping down his purpling face. "Leave. George. Alone."

"Fuck you!" Dylan growled nasally.

Dream kicked him in the ribs, hard. "I'm sorry, what was that?"

Dylan pitched forward, coughing blood on the ground and groaning. He didn't say anything for a moment.

Dream danced out of the way, keeping himself away from the spraying liquid. "I can keep doing this for a while yet. You gonna leave George alone?"

Dylan said nothing, so Dream kicked him in the ribs again.

"Yeah, okay, I will!" Dylan coughed, tears starting to roll down his cheeks. "I'm sorry!"

"No, you're not," Dream spat, "But if I hear a whisper from you again, you will be."

With that, Dream dropped him to the ground and left the alley. In the immediate area around the scene, he kept calm, walking as if nothing was wrong so people wouldn't question him. He had done it in such a way that there was no blood on him, and no visible injuries (though his knee wasn't exactly happy with him). He was from Florida, and he had been a troubled kid. He knew how to get in, beat up, and get out, without being caught.

After he got a couple blocks away, he checked the time. "Fuck, I'm running late," he groaned out loud.

So he took off at a sprint, full speed, trying to get there before George got out to an empty waiting room. He suddenly realized that he hadn't been running as much as he used to. Minecraft had made him a little soft. It didn't matter, though, he wouldn't be late for George if he could help it.

Unfortunately, despite his best efforts, he found himself a few minutes late, so he didn't bother to stop as he got to the building. Dream skidded into the entryway, catching a very distraught looking George scanning the room for him. Watching George's face light up when their eyes met made everything worth it.

He was panting, his chest heaving with the effort of breathing, as he stood in the entryway of the building. He felt a little wild and feral, but it was good. He had accomplished something important.

"Hey George, sorry about that," he gasped.

"Hey Dream, you alright?"

"Yeah, come on! I'll tell you about it in the car." Dream grinned, and tried not to rush George as he picked his way through the chairs in the waiting room. Dream had probably gotten away just fine, but it didn't hurt to get out of the area completely.

Finally, George's handsome smiling face was right beside his, and they left the building together. George seemed a little more centered and calm, which was a good sign, and Dream was happy to hear it. Very successful day.

The second the doors to the car closed, George's big eyes were tearing Dream apart accusingly. "What were you doing?"

Dream had been trying to think of a good answer since he formulated the plan, and he had some good contenders, but those brown eyes were so disarming, they all flew right out of his head. All he managed to get out was, “I had to... chase a bad man down.”

“Chase a bad man down?” George asked incredulously.

“Yes.”

“What does that even mean?”

“It means what it means,” Dream replied evasively. He wasn’t being very convincing, and he knew it, but he really didn’t know what else to say.

George thought about it for a moment, staring Dream down to try and get more information, but Dream gave him nothing. Finally, a light went off in George’s eyes, and he said, “Whatever.”

Dream didn’t know if George had actually figured what he had done, but he thought it best if he didn’t ask.

On the way home, Dream suggested they go to a phone store and get George’s number changed. He was pretty sure that Dylan would leave George alone after the beating, but it didn’t hurt to add that extra layer of protection, and George wholeheartedly agreed. The change was relatively easy, especially when Dream hinted at a stalker.

The first person to get his new number was Dream.

## Chapter End Notes

Dream messages Dylan with the stolen phone number, convinces him to meet up with him (pretending to be George), and uses George's therapy hour to corner him in an alley. He then beats Dylan until Dylan promises to leave George alone. Then, he rushes back to therapy, showing up a little late. He doesn't really tell George what he was doing, and George decides he doesn't want to know. Then, they change George's phone number and go home.

## The Last Night

George slid his key into the lock and swung the door open, with Dream right behind him. There was something so... domestic about it. A morning of cuddling followed by an afternoon of errands, topped off by them coming home together.

It felt right.

It also felt illegal, so George didn't comment on it. Just like he hadn't commented on Dream's lame excuse for coming into the office a mess. He honestly had no idea what had happened or what any of it meant, but he decided he didn't need to know. Something in his gut told him that everything was fine, and it might be best to leave it alone.

The lights flipped on, and George suddenly realized this was the last time they would be coming home like this. The next time he came back home after dark, Dream would be on a plane. It stopped him in his tracks.

"You alright, George?" Dream asked softly, walking into George's line of sight.

"Yeah... It's just. This is the last night."

"Oh." Dream was silent for a moment. "I hadn't really been tracking time, and I didn't want to think about it."

"Neither did I. It just popped up."

"Hey, don't worry! This isn't the end! It's just a pause! You still have to come out to see Florida, and now that we've broken the ice and seen each other, it will be much easier to meet up again."

"That's true..."

"Besides," Dream said, teasingly, "I don't know if you know this, but I'm a pretty famous Youtuber with a good amount of money."

"Shut up, Dream," George laughed.

"You can be my sugar baby if you want!" Dream's grin was as infectious as his wheezing laughter.

"I'm a strong, independent man," George retorted with false offense, his smile never leaving, "I have money in my own right!"

"See," Dream said, softly again, with meaning George couldn't quite catch, "We'll see each other again. I promise." He held his arms out, an offer.

George couldn't turn him down. He fell into it, cherishing this small thing they had found in each other. They hadn't kissed, hadn't touched each other in that way, but George was sure he hadn't felt more love than the love that Dream poured into these hugs, even if it was just the platonic love between friends.

"I promise," Dream whispered, mostly to himself, squeezing George close to him.

"You better."

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After their hug, it didn't really feel right to separate, especially with the impending separation forced by time and distance. They moved as one to the couch, collapsing onto it together, and flipped on something. Dream was lying completely flat on the couch, with George on top of him, resting a head on his chest. Their eyes were focused on the screen, but their minds were not.

Dream was thinking about this precious man that he had in his arms, and how he would ever be able to break the fact that he had feelings for him. He wouldn't want to hurt George, or make George do anything that made him feel uncomfortable. If there was even a chance that his feelings weren't reciprocated, he wouldn't say a word.

But with George cuddling into his chest, the soft breath whispering against his shirt, and slender fingers tracing circles on his skin, he allowed himself to believe.

George was thinking much the same thing, about the amazing man who dropped everything to make him feel better, the safety he felt, the concern. Dream let go when George even breathed like he didn't want something. He had been so patient through all of this, from the crying to being attacked! He was even cradling George, and running his fingers up and down his back.

In that moment, George let himself pretend. He imagined a world without the assault, where Dream had just come out to meet him, where these things were all clearly romantic, and there were no barriers to them exploring what seemed like a spark between them.

It was a nice world.

Whatever thing they had been watching had ended, and the credits had finished rolling, so now they were staring at Netflix's recommendation in silence, almost too caught up in each other to even realize.

Finally, they had to eat and relive themselves, so with almost audible frustration, they peeled apart.

After their last dinner together, Sapnap asked them to hop on the server. They couldn't really say no, especially since they had been basically ignoring him while being completely wrapped up in each other. It was the least they could do, especially since he was genuinely such a good friend.

They didn't separate from each other though. After some minor negotiation, it ended with Dream lying on his stomach on his bed, laptop in front of him, with George leaning against his torso, laptop in his lap. They had George's phone between them on speaker to play. Sapnap didn't comment, thankfully.

It really felt impossible to imagine a world where they wouldn't be touching right now.

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It was hard to convince themselves to go to bed, knowing that tomorrow was the last day. They stayed up, finding one more thing to do (and another and another), well past when they should have given in and slept.

Even Sapnap commented, “Isn’t it getting late over there?”

“Yeah, probably,” George mused.

But neither of them wanted to have to move.

Eventually, they did actually need to sleep. Both of them couldn’t stop yawning, and Sapnap basically bullied them into signing off and going to bed.

Then they were left alone with the insurmountable. What were the sleeping arrangements going to be that night?

George was still lying on Dream’s back, and it was kind of perfect. How was he supposed to end it by choice?

Dream didn’t seem eager to move him either. He had closed his laptop and pushed it to the side, grabbing a pillow to shove under his face. It would be so easy for them to stay like this, accidentally sleeping in the position they had become so tired and comfortable in.

George got up, despite himself.

“Where are you going?” Dream asked almost immediately, pushing himself up right and twisting around so he could look George in the eyes.

“Bathroom then bed?”

A small blush crept into Dream’s face (though George couldn’t quite see it). “Right. Of course.”

George’s thoughts were swirling all at once, some fast, some slow. It was hard to track, and he focused very carefully on getting ready for bed. When he left the bathroom, Dream slipped in without a word.

George was ready to lie down, but something held him back. He sat on his bed, facing the open door, and waited. He wanted something, and this time he was going to ask.

Several minutes later, Dream walked by, almost not noticing George there, but he took a self-indulgent look at what he expected to be a closed door, only to see, “George?”

The man in question had his eyes scrunched tight and his fists balled up in his pajama bottoms. “Dreamwouldyouliketospendthenightinmyroominstead?”

“What?”

George took a deep breath. “Dream, would you like to spend the night in my room instead?” he repeated, slower.

“Um...?”

“If you don’t, that’s completely fine. I totally understand. I mean I hit you the last time, but I was thinking that it’s... nice and this time we can set some ground rules and be in my room instead so it’s a more familiar environment. I just really appreciated the offer, and everything you have done honestly, and it’s the last night you’re going to be here, so now’s the time to try again, if you were interested, which, again, it’s okay if you are not...” George babbled, before finally trailing off.

Dream was trying really, *really* hard not to laugh. George was absolutely pink, so wound up tight and practically out of breath from just trying to ask. It was the cutest thing, but Dream didn’t want

him to think he was mocking him. He took a deep breath, containing his giggles, and said, “No, that sounds good to me. What ground rules were you thinking?”

“I was mostly thinking of one, for now. No touching each other while we are sleeping.”

“Yeah, that’s probably a good idea. Are you sure there isn’t anything else you need from me?”

George had started to unwind at Dream’s willingness to participate, and he looked into Dream’s eyes. There were a lot of thoughts flitting about in his head, and a lot of desires. *Kiss me before we sleep*. His brain produced, unhelpfully. *Don’t fly back to Florida. Declare your undying love for me and move in. Hold me forever, and never let me go.* “No, I can’t think of anything else. Can you?”

Dream’s eyes became unfocused for a moment, as he reflected on whatever other rules they might enact, George assumed, but he said, “No I can’t think of anything.”

“Okay, that sounds good...”

“Perfect, then scoot over, honey!” The serious expression disappeared, and suddenly Dream was a goof with a huge grin again.

George rolled his eyes, trying to convince himself he regretted his decision. When that failed, he (eagerly) rolled to the other side of the bed. The bed shifted as Dream clamored in. George grinned despite himself, and rolled over, now facing away from him.

Dream was giddy and trying to hide it. He had secretly hoped for the opportunity to try again, to lie next to George and be in his presence, before the reality of their distance came crashing back. He wanted nothing more than to lie here with him. There was no thought of kissing, let alone other things, and he was completely content with that. Where George saw a conclusion, Dream saw a beginning. This time was ending, but it was the event that would kick off every subsequent visit and whatever changes that came from their relationship. Even if they never dated, Dream would be happy for chance cuddles and small moments for the rest of his life.

The room was strangely familiar to him as he scanned it. He realized suddenly that he hadn’t actually been in here since coming to George’s apartment, since the door was kept mostly closed, and most of the hanging out had been in the living and guest rooms. This was the room George did his streams from, and he could see the tricked out computer setup (that Dream had paid for) just past the foot of the bed. He had seen so much of this room, but he had never been in it. It felt like trust, like he had been let into a private place because he had earned it. He wasn’t sure if that was actually true, but it was nice.

It didn’t take long for George to fall asleep. Despite all his blustering, it had been a big day for him, and Dream was a comforting presence, even as he was bursting with nervous, excited energy.

Dream never wanted to leave.

Letting himself fall asleep was hard. He was so wound up, and he wanted to savor every minute he got to be this close to George before they had to wait again. Eventually though, he was lulled into resting by his own comforting focus on George.

Dream felt the nightmares come, and they haunted him. He knew he could do nothing as his friend, whom he loved, suffered beside him. Waking him wouldn’t make it better. He remembered his own nightmares (they still haunted him from time to time), and how tortuous they were. Hopefully therapy would help George as it had helped him.



The sleep Dream managed to get was fitful because of George, but it didn't bother him in the slightest, and when the sun rose, they both finally relaxed into a solid, restful sleep for a few hours before they woke to their final day together.

## Last Day

George woke first, stretching and humming and groaning his way into full consciousness. For a moment, he forgot that there was another person in the bed, but he was reminded by the radiating warmth and occasional snores. Dream was so beautiful when he slept, and George couldn't help but stare, enjoying this private moment to ogle his friend.

Dream woke not long after, opening his green eyes to find George staring at him. "Morning, creeper," he teased.

"No, I wasn't! Shut *up* ! I was just... zoned out."

"Uh-huh. Sure you were."

George could feel heat rising in his cheek, and he turned away to hide it. "Whatever."

"Oh, come on now, George. I was only teasing."

Except he had literally been staring, so it was a little too close to home. "I don't know why I even invited you to spend the night in here."

"Because you wanted easy morning cuddles?" Dream asked.

George's face was actually on fire by this point. It was so embarrassing, and he couldn't tell which parts were Dream reading him well, or Dream just teasing as he always did and getting too close to the truth. "Um, what?"

"I mean, you had nightmares last night, right? So I assumed that, once you were fully awake and conscious of your surroundings, you might want some tactile comfort?"

That was a good way to put it. Much less romantic crush and more homies supporting bros. "Oh, yeah, absolutely."

"What did you think I was talking about?"

George could hear the devious grin in his voice, so he shot back, "I thought you were trying to make a move on me."

"I would never!" with false offense.

*I wish you would...* George thought wistfully. "Well, as long as your motives are pure, I would appreciate morning cuddles, actually." He scooted back across the bed toward Dream's voice, until long arms caught him and drew him in.

"My motives are pure as fresh snow," Dream murmured as their bodies connected.

Fuck, it was absolutely heavenly. George didn't think he had ever had morning cuddles before, at least not like this. It was so perfect, he wondered if he might fall back asleep. He snuggled a little closer (avoiding rubbing certain areas with his butt), and pulled Dream's arms tighter.

What if they just lay like this forever?

But heaven on earth is never permanent, and their stomachs started to complain rather aggressively. Despite their best efforts to ignore them and stay where they were, eventually, they

had to detach from each other and be responsible. It was honestly kind of offensive.

By this point in the visit, they had become quite comfortable with each other's touch, so, though they weren't interlocked from tip to tail anymore, they still found ways to brush against each other and just be near each other while they made food. Both of them stubbornly avoided looking at the clock, or even their phones. They just existed with each other, as if there was no impending separation.

But there was, and eventually, they resigned themselves to packing Dream's bag and getting ready to go. George spent the entire time trying to figure out what he should do about this. Should he tell Dream what all this had meant to him, how deeply he had been affected and the emotions it had brought up? Or should he just let Dream go back home, and pretend like all this hadn't happened?

George wasn't sure he would be able to go back to the way things had been.

He took the scenic route to the airport, letting Dream drink in the beauty of the English countryside. There was something magical about watching Dream's eyes trace the rolling green hills, the trees, and the random animals that dotted the landscape. Florida had greenery, but England was 45% rain, so everything was lush.

"It looks like a fairytale..." Dream murmured as he saw the little stone walls around the road.

It felt like one too. The princess running out of the ball as the clock strikes midnight. George snickered, because that would make Dream the princess.

"What's funny?" Dream asked, not looking back from the car window.

"Nothing. Just imagining you in a dress."

"WHAT?"

"You said it was like a fairytale."

"Oh!" Dream started to laugh. "I thought that you were just super excited to get me in one!"

"Who knows?" George teased, "Maybe next time."

"Oh my God, George."

Even with their meandering pace and purposefully extended route, they did eventually reach their airport. It was looming, imposing, and evil, as it promised to keep them away from each other, even though it wasn't its fault.

George pulled into a parking space, and they just sat there for a moment. Neither of them wanted to leave, and both of them wanted to say *something*, but what was there to say? There was still this impenetrable barrier between them, as neither of them had actually had the courage to talk about how they felt, so they sat next to each other, confessions pressing against their lips, but trapped in silence.

If Sapnap had been there, he might have screamed at them, but he was still in Texas.

When it became clear that neither of them could speak, they got out of the car. Dream really couldn't miss his flight, no matter how much he wanted to. Unfortunately, outside of the perfect little bubble they had made together, the real world had kept turning.

The need to say or do something, *anything* , grew as they got closer to the security line. It was eating George up inside, and he couldn't stand it. This felt like the last time they would ever get to see each other (even though he knew that wasn't true), and he couldn't bear to have Dream leave without giving him some hint. Otherwise, he worried he would never have the courage to address the casual touching and needy cuddling that had defined their last week together.

He grabbed Dream's arm and yanked him behind a decorative pillar, relatively isolated from the rest of the airport. Dream followed without question, eyebrow raised in anticipation.

"Hey, Dream...?" George murmured quietly, fidgeting in place. Was he actually going to do this?

"Yeah, George?"

"Um..." George stared at the floor, scanning back and forth between their shoes. Finally, he forced himself to look up, to meet Dream's eyes, his beautiful eyes. He looked confused and so handsome. Was he really going to do this?

No, he wasn't. He couldn't. Not until he was completely sure. Not until he knew that what he was going to do was wanted. He would not pass the curse that Dylan had left in him to his friend like that.

"Uh, have a safe flight." George held out his arms for their goodbye hug.

Dream paused for a moment, as if he had been expecting something else, but he rolled with it. He gathered George up in his long arms, pouring all the love and affection he could into the final embrace of the trip.

It felt good for both of them, but they said nothing about it. Just choked goodbyes and continuous waving until Dream slipped out of sight.

Then George was left alone.

He wandered back to his car in a sort of daze. How was he meant to go back to before? How could he survive without Dream to lean on at every turn? Was he strong enough?

He figured he had to be.

His car was so very empty when he slipped inside. He kept expecting Dream to collapse into the passenger seat, jostling the whole car and laughing about it. Had they only been physically with each other for 5 days? It felt like so much more.

George was getting geared up for a really deep moodiness when he saw the notification on his phone. A text from Dream.

*Hey! I'm about to get on the plane, but I wanted to say another goodbye and tell you that I already miss you! I'll message you when I get home to let you know I'm safe. Also, we should probably stream or something soon. I bet the fans are anxious! Much love! <3*

A single tear traced the curve of George's cheekbone and the length of his jaw, but it wasn't a sad one. Dream wasn't physically *there* , but he would always be there for him. George couldn't forget that.

Those words gave him the strength to get home. He would have to do a lot of healing on his own, but he wasn't alone.

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The moment Dream got off the plane, he paused to send a message to George, letting him know he had landed. The message was as much for him as it was for George, since he hated planes, and it was nice for someone else to acknowledge that he had made it.

The first thing he noticed was that George had replied to his first message.

I already miss you too! Hope your flight is easy and smooth. Much love to you too! <3 And yes, let's stream soon, after you recover from the jetlag!

Dream sent a quick reply, confirming his safe landing and some potential streaming plans. It felt good that their communication hadn't changed, much.

In the airport, for the briefest moment, Dream had been sure that George was going to kiss him. It had clearly been wishful thinking or his imagination, but that lingering feeling was still there. That, however, was an issue to be addressed later. Besides, George had sent his love, and Dream didn't need anything more than that.

Heated Excuses

Despite everything that happened in the visit, once they got back to their regular lives, their conversations returned to how they had been before. To be fair, their normal conversations had included lots of teasing already, and they had been play flirting with each other for a long time, but their dynamic never really changed.

Neither of them brought up the real moments of weakness they had shared with each other. Neither of them talked about spending more and more time touching each other at all times. Neither of them mentioned morning cuddles, therapy, or mysterious "bad men" chased away.

Neither asked if there had been an almost kiss.

And it was fine, honestly, or as fine as it could be.

It wasn't that the assault itself was ignored. New ground rules, especially around live streams, were put into place. Secret safe words and warning signals were put into effect, so that George wouldn't snap on stream again.

This openness in communication did spread through the community though, a secret tidal wave of safety and change. There was a LOT of teasing and joking that happened on streams, and, inevitably, it went too far sometimes.

It started with Dream using a safe word during a particularly stressful speed run where they wouldn't stop distracting him. Then Sapnap used one when they went too hard with the teasing once. Sapnap told BadBoyHalo about safe words after a particularly bad argument, to keep it from happening again, and he told Karl after a flirt too far. From there, it started spreading, until everyone on the SMP knew them and respected them. Sometimes it was out loud, sometimes it was a message, but they always meant, "Please actually listen to me!"

The SMP was a lot more fun and carefree after that. People still went too far sometimes, but the communication aid was there, ready to go.

It was good for George to witness that, to see old toxic habits fade away and bring everyone together. It gave him hope that he could heal too.

And heal he did. It took time, longer than he wanted and far longer than he would ever admit, but he got better. He would never be cured, but he could manage. He and Dr. Harper settled on twice a week, and he got to work. He unraveled the fear, the fragility, and the feeling of being so small. He also found that he had to untangle his feelings for Dream from the event, since they had gone through such a dramatic change in the middle of the trauma storm. After he realized that, he started to be happy that he hadn't kissed Dream in the airport that day. Where would they be now if he had?

Even after he was ready, fully ready, to consider a relationship, he stalled, anxiety overriding his ability to say anything. The memories of those five blissful days were fuzzy from time, and their relationship felt unaffected. Surely, what George had felt was just platonic, friendly love. Dream did everything big, and he loved all of his friends with his whole heart. George felt that he might be special to Dream, but was he *that* special?

He didn't know.

So he waited, and nothing happened for a long time.

~~~

“Dream, it is honestly *so* hot here,” George whined. He had been streaming earlier, but he begged off. He told his fans that it was too hot to think, but the real reason he shut it down was that he couldn’t bear to be clothed for a moment longer, and he had no desire to show thousands of internet strangers his bare chest. Thankfully, they had been understanding, but Dream wasn’t.

“Oh, poor Georgie,” Dream teased, “Poor whittle baybeeee. It’s 85 whole degrees over there. How can you stand it?”

“First, it’s actually 30 degrees in the *correct* measure, and second shut *up*!” George shot back through the fabric of his shirt, pulling it over his head. “It’s *hooooooot*. Besides, *you* have air conditioning. I live in England, by the ocean! It’s not supposed to get this hot!”

“George, listen, it’s literally a hundred degrees here. ONE *HUNDRED* ! I cannot have any sympathy for you.”

They had had this argument a million times before, and it was all in good fun, a kind of pattern that they fell into with each other. Except this time...

“Yes, but you have air conditioning! I guarantee I would be just fine in 38 degrees centigrade if I could have AC. I think you underestimate how much that helps you.”

“Oh you *guarantee* it, huh?”

“Yeah, I do!” George huffed.

“Fine, bet. It will be *one hundred* degrees in Florida for a while yet. Come over here and prove it! Prove you can handle the heat!”

“What?”

“Oh, I’m sorry. Mad I called your bluff? I bet you won’t even make it a day before you cave.”

George was confused. Was Dream hitting on him, or were they really just this competitive? Either way, George was honestly fine with it. They hadn’t been able to find any excuse to meet up since last time (which was *way* too long ago), so why not take the bait? It’s not like it would be much worse than it was here, right?

So, after a brief moment of consideration, George replied, “You know what? Fine, I’ll look up a flight right now!”

“Wait, really?”

“Oh, are you afraid that *I* will call *your* bluff?”

“I mean, I honestly thought you were kidding.”

George stopped looking up flights for a moment. “Do you want me to be kidding?”

“No, I don’t.”

“Then get ready to lose, piss baby!” George tried to make it sound like a challenge, but it was so ridiculous that he and Dream burst out laughing.

After they calmed down a little, Dream asked, “What are the stakes? Like what do I get if I win?”

“When *I* win, you have to pay, or reimburse me, for my *entire* trip. I’m talking plane tickets, snacks on the plane, food, souvenirs, and anything else I want. And if you *somehow* manage to win, I will pay for everything I get, plus everything you get for the week I’m there. So, like, if I go crazy on the plane ride in, and then I immediately lose, I will have basically fucked myself, monetarily.”

“You know what, yeah, that sounds good. You better budget for a *huge* bill then, because I am *definitely* winning this bet.”

“No, Dream, *you* had better budget for a huge bill. I’m literally looking at first class seating already.”

“Oh my God, you are going to *so* regret that when you lose.”

“Whatever you say, Dream.” George was quiet for a moment as he scanned plane ticket options and seating arrangements. “Oh! We should set some ground rules too.”

“Rules like what...?” Dream asked, hesitantly.

“Stuff like: If I actually cannot stand it, I have to be honest and tell you. I can’t admit that you were right in my head and not say anything. But you can’t turn your AC off, or set the activation temperature high, so that it barely turns on. You have to use it exactly as you would without the bet.”

Dream breathed a sigh of relief and let out an awkward chuckle. “Oh! That’s what you meant. Yeah those seem fair.”

The rest of the night was spent picking the days George could be there, planning the trip, and making arrangements. Both of them were incredibly excited at the prospect of seeing the other in person, but neither of them mentioned it. For all intents and purposes, the only reason this trip was happening was to prove a petty point, but that was honestly a flimsy excuse.

At some point, he texted Sapnap about the trip, freaking out. His feelings hadn’t changed in all the time apart, and he wasn’t sure what would happen, especially now that he was going to physically be with him.

Sapnap was, as always, kind but impatient with him. He kept telling George, *Please just tell him already!* But George had no idea why.

~~~

Four days later, George was flying into Florida. He had gotten the fanciest, most expensive seat he could find. It was a first class seat with extra leg room and it was personally catered. It was a wonderful feeling, and he did take advantage. Some part of him was realistic, though, so he didn’t go too wild with the snacks and entrees and desserts. Dream could, theoretically, be right after all. He had to find a balance between absolutely gorging himself and being responsible in case his own wallet took the hit.

As they started to descend, a low prickle of anxiety bubbled in George's stomach. It had been a while since they had seen each other, and he wasn't sure what seeing Dream's face would do to him. He hadn't seen it since the visit. He couldn't bear to ask for pictures (too weird), and Dream hadn't offered.

He had practiced for anxiety in therapy, though, and he was getting better at it. Several deep breaths, some soothing thoughts, and some gentle redirection had him calming down enough to handle it. There was no need to worry about what would happen to their friendship from the plane. Either something would happen or it wouldn't, and George would deal with it then.

It all felt very *deja vu* as he walked toward the baggage claim, even though it was a different airport and he was the one arriving. Dream would be there soon, or he was there already, and it brought him back to that moment, all those months ago, where Dream had seen him in person for the first time and grinned.

Almost as if on cue, there he was, scrolling through his phone, with the rotating bag display as a backdrop.

It all came rushing back. Oh fuck. It was easy to deny (or ignore) the deep well of feelings he had for Dream in the day to day, but seeing him, standing there, leaning against a pole nonchalantly, hit him in the chest. George was in love with him, and he was in a good enough place to really feel it, minus a lot of the previous baggage.

The sudden epiphany was a bit jarring, and he stumbled a little as he walked over.

Dream's gaze popped up at the sudden movement, and again his face split with that ear to ear grin. George couldn't help but return the expression, so happy to see his friend, to be exciting to him. In that smile, George felt like Dream would be this happy to see him every single time they got together again, even if it had been hours instead of months and months.

"GEORGE!!" Dream bellowed, dropping his phone in his pocket and holding his arms out.

George almost screamed Dream's name back, but decided against it, considering the lack of a face reveal. Instead, he just barreled into Dream at full speed, forcing a little air from his lungs.

"Dream..." It was a whisper only for Dream's ears, and he shuddered slightly.

"It's *so* good to see you, George," Dream murmured with a squeeze.

"It's so good to see you, too." *More than you might ever know.*

After a moment, they disconnected, both of them wanting to stay interlocked together but worried about the people watching them in the airport. They pulled apart, eyes meeting with such intensity that they both had to look away.

George found himself panting slightly.

"Um, let's... let's, uh, let's get to my car..." Dream sputtered, gesturing that George should follow.

"Yeah, that sounds good to me."

The entire process felt so familiar, despite the fact that Orlando's airport was so completely different than Heathrow. They walked together in jittery silence past souvenir shops and food stops, as time dragged them back. The airport seemed like it would never end.

Of course, it did end, and they finally managed to escape to the outside world. However, when they left Heathrow, it had been the fresh, crisp air of an average London day, but Florida's air was not like this. It was like walking into a physical wall of hot swamp water. George's face scrunched in frustration and discomfort. He might lose this bet.

Dream couldn't help but laugh at George's horrified expression, and it became hard for him to breathe as he watched George's attempts to move through the thick, humid air.

"What the fuck?" George gasped.

Dream was almost falling over by this point. He had wheezed so hard that it was getting difficult for him to get air into him.

"Oh my GOD." George stood still for a moment, trying to acclimate to the blanket of sticky warmth, but he didn't really have the tools for it. "I am not admitting defeat yet though! This is awful, but I didn't even notice in the airport, because of the AC." To be fair, the AC almost made it worse, since he had gone from a completely normal temperature to something so unbearably hot it made him want to scream.

"Are you sure?" Dream managed, desperately trying to calm down.

"I'm sure! Let's get to your place. And remember, no funny business! I expect the AC to be running!"

"Yeah, of course, of course. I wouldn't be able to stand it either." Dream had gotten himself together enough to speak, despite giggling occasionally, and they walked to his car.

The car was worse than the outside world, and George hovered at the open door, completely unwilling to get in.

"Don't worry, Georgie, I'll turn on the air," Dream said, shaking with renewed amusement.

"It's not that funny!" George insisted, pouting a little.

This only made it funnier for Dream. "It's kind of funny!" Despite this, he did turn the car on and get the cool air running at full blast. "You have to get in and close the door though."

George's face fell to the boiling hot ground. Every fiber of his being was telling him not to get into the heat box, but he ignored the alarm bells and carefully perched himself on the car seat. With a last gasp of effort, he slammed the door shut. The blasting air was starting to be cool, and he turned every vent to him, sighing.

"You doing alright?" Dream asked, still laughing.

"Shut up, Dream."

"You wanna admit defeat?"

"No! I'm doing fine."

"Are you sure?" Dream was starting to wheeze again. "Because you didn't see your face!"

They had to sit in the parking lot for a few minutes while Dream settled down enough that he could drive. Once the air cooled off, George thought it was pretty funny too.

Do you?

The car ride brought everything back to normal, just like it had last time. They chattered away, filling each other in like they hadn't been talking literally the night before. It felt good to be able to look over, to see, to theoretically touch, to feel. It felt right.

Dream drove pretty erratically, and George quietly gripped his car door. Thankfully, the airport was much closer to Dream's place than it had been to George's. After only about 15 minutes, they were pulling into the driveway of a nice house.

Stepping back out into the "fresh" air was another nightmare for George, which was a delight for Dream to watch, but at least he was better prepared for it this time. That made it a little easier to drag his slowly dying body to the front door.

"Don't you worry, baby," Dream murmured, "The air inside the house will feel wonderful."

George had to carefully ignore the pet name (and the way it made him feel) as he crossed into the house. He was sure that Dream would be teasing, but it was really nice inside. Dream must have really kept it cold for him, which he appreciated. He pushed inside without a second thought, desperate to escape the damp fingers of heat that clung to him as he entered.

"Oh thank GOD," George moaned.

"Feel better?"

"Yes, obviously. I will admit that it's never gotten that hot in England, at least as far as I remember, but the air conditioning makes it one hundred percent better, which just proves my point!"

"Well, we'll just have to see how well you last. We got eight days for you to crack!"

"No," George scoffed, "we have eight days for me to rack up a huge bill for you to pay." The worst of it was over, he was sure of that.

"You can't stay inside the entire time! That's cheating!"

"If I had AC in Brighton, I would stay inside the entire time. The only reason I go out on a hot day is to go to stores that have cold air in them. If I had it myself, I wouldn't leave."

"That may be true, but it also defeats the purpose of the bet."

George grinned. "Shoulda thought of that before I flew out here then."

Dream pouted dramatically, crossing his arms over his chest.

"I know what might make you feel better though..."

"What?" Dream asked, faking petulance.

"I'm finally cooled off enough to give you another hug."

Dream tried really hard to keep pouting, but he gave in. "I mean, I guess that sounds alright." He gathered George into his arms and held him close. After a moment's hesitation, he kissed George on the forehead.

George was surprised, but it brought a smile to his face, which he promptly hid in Dream's shirt.

~~~

Eventually, they found themselves tangled in each other on top of the couch. The extreme heat and long flight (and the anxiety) had sapped George's energy, and he ended up lightly dozing on top of Dream. It was so wonderful for George, but Dream was laying as still as possible, terrified of startling the man in his arms.

Finally, Dream had to press the issue. A combination of Florida heat, two drives, and the cuddle had left him with a need to get up. "George!" he whispered.

No response.

"George!!!" he whispered again, a little louder.

"Mmm?"

"I need to get up!"

"Hmm? Oh... Oh! Okay. Yeah, lemme jus," George sat up, which left him straddling Dream (though George didn't notice), rubbed his eyes, and rolled off of Dream's body onto an empty section of couch, immediately returning to his nap.

Dream hopped up and used the restroom. He was getting better at telling people his own needs, and one of the first people he had started to practice with was George.

When he returned the couch, George had sprawled out, still sleeping. One of his arms was flung over his eyes, and Dream couldn't help but trace the lines of his collar bones, his jaw, his long fingers.

Fuck.

He left George to rest, flipping the lights off in the living room for him on his way to his bedroom. There, he pulled out his laptop and messaged Sapnap.

*Hey, you on?*

*Yeah, what's up?*

*George just arrived. He's taking a nap.*

*Awwww, how cute. Our boy got all tuckered out from his big day.*

Dream completely ignored that, instead saying, *I think I'm going to tell him.*

*Wait, like tell him the big thing?*

*Yeah... I think he's ready...*

*But are you?*

Dream sat in front of the computer for a moment, drumming on the mousepad. *Yes.*

*Well then do it! Good luck dude! I think it will go well.*

*Why?*

*I just have a feeling.*

Sapnap didn't elect to say anything more about that, despite Dream's gentle prodding. Surely, he knew something he wasn't saying. Dream demanded answers, but Sapnap remained evasive, frustratingly. He just said things like, "I got good intuition," which he had literally never said before. After a while, Dream gave up, and they started chatting normally.

Then Dream heard some noises from the living room, scooting on couch cushions and sleepy mumbles.

*Sorry, Sapnap, he's waking up. Gotta go.*

*Go take care of your boyfriend.*

*He's not! Not yet, anyway...*

*Uh huh.*

Dream rolled his eyes, impatient with the teasing, and slipped back into the living room, just as George called out for him.

"Oh. There you are. Sorry for passing out like that," George said sheepishly.

"No worries. Heat and travel will do that to a person. I don't mind at all. We have time."

"Thanks for understanding. I still feel a bit groggy..."

"Groggy Gogy!" Dream teased.

"Shut *up*, Dream," George laughed, rubbing his eyes.

"I will not!" Dream grinned back. "But maybe we could go for a swim? It feels really good, especially with the heat, and it will help wake you all the way."

"Umm... I don't know if I want to be around other people right now."

"I mentioned that I have a pool, right?" Dream asked, pulling back the curtains to his backyard.

"No, you just told me to bring a swimsuit..." George got up off the couch, taking a moment to stretch and ruffle his hair, before looking through the sliding glass to the large pool outside.

Dream's breath was caught for a moment as he watched George stretch, respectfully. He had forgotten how bewitching it was to be around him, even more so since George was less skittish and more healed. It didn't feel as forbidden to look at him this way. The wall of fear had started to crumble, especially since George had learned to trust Dream so much.

"I must admit I'm a little nervous..." George crossed his arms over his chest.

"Can I ask why?"

“Um... You’ve never seen me shirtless...”

“Oh. Well, I am happy to accommodate in any way. You can wear a shirt or I can close my eyes or we can do something completely different!”

George screwed up his eyes, something he usually did while he was thinking, and finally said, “No... No, I want to go swimming. Um... Just, let me get in the pool before you look?”

“Of course.”

~~~

George spent a lot of time in the guest bedroom that Dream had set up for him. First, he was just taken back by the décor. It had so clearly been set up just for him, all shades of blue and yellow, and that made the room feel so alive and vibrant. He was pretty sure there wasn’t a single red or green thing in the entire room (though George couldn’t exactly be sure).

After that, he was simply stalling. Dream was the definition of handsome, and George... Well, he didn’t dislike his body, but he also didn’t relish the idea of being next to Dream like that. He was so... small, so short. He had muscles, but compared to Dream? It felt like it would make Dream like him less, and ruin any chances of anything happening.

Eventually, though, he found his courage. Dream had literally held George against his body, wrapped his arms all the way around, and rested his head on George’s chest. If he didn’t know that George was skinny at this point, that was his fault.

With that thought, and some false confidence, he strode to the back in just his blue swim trunks. He slid the glass door open carefully, leaned out, and said, “Alright, I’m going in. Please close your eyes...”

“Eyes are closed!”

George peeked around the curtain he was using to hide his body and saw that not only did Dream have a hand over his eyes, he was completely turned away. His heart swelled in his chest. *I love him*.

But George said nothing in that moment. He just quickly and quietly scampered across the concrete (which was HOT) and practically dove into the pool. He came up, sputtering water and laughing, but Dream hadn’t turned around.

“Thank you very much, Dream, you can turn around now.”

“You’re very welcome!” Dream turned with a grin and immediately splashed George in the face.

“You *asshole!*” George spat, rubbing water out of his eyes.

“Sorry! Was that too far?!”

“No, but you’re going to regret it!” With an evil glint in his eye, George splashed Dream back, and then got him again while Dream was still recovering.

“Fuck!” Dream wiped the water away. “It’s on now!”

They spent the better part of the day playing and splashing in the water. At first, George was self-conscious around shirtless Dream, who wasn't shredded, but wasn't exactly scrawny either, but over time, George simply forgot to be worried. He was having too much fun, and Dream was nothing but sweet. There was a lot of teasing back and forth, but none of it was ever about George's body (because of course, Dream would never).

Finally, the sun was setting, and they were getting hungry. Without even thinking, George hopped out of the pool, stepping onto the finally cooling concrete, to grab a towel. When he turned, towel in hand, Dream was staring at him.

"What?" George demanded, covering himself. He couldn't see it in the dim light, but Dream was blushing.

"Nothing... It's just... You're really cute."

"Oh my God, shut up."

"No, I mean it!"

"Whatever," George sighed, continuing to dry himself off, as if his heart wasn't trying to soar through his chest.

~~~

An hour later, they had showered and acquired pizza. It had been such a lovely day, and Dream was just so... good. George kept finding himself staring, watching the way he ate, how he laughed, how he talked. He felt something growing inside of him, ready to burst, as he ate his own pizza. He had felt it growing all day, since the moment he saw Dream in the airport, but he didn't know what it meant or what it was. It was swelling inside him though. Something was going to happen.

Despite him recognizing that there was *a* feeling, what actually happened completely caught him off guard. He felt like he was going to burst, and then, he did. With a sigh, he said, "I love you, Dream."

George's eyes went absolutely bug eyed, and his hand slapped over his mouth. *What?*

"I love you, too, George," Dream replied without hesitation, not even looking up.

For a moment, George thought about letting it go. Dream had taken it as normal, the way they had always said it to each other. He could just pretend it had never happen, let them be friends only, and move on.

But it was time. It had been long enough, and some part of him knew that this would work out the way they needed it to. He was so nervous, almost literally vibrating with anxiety, but a sudden confidence overwhelmed him.

"No, Dream, *I love you*."

Dream stopped eating. He put his plate down on the coffee table between them. He meticulously picked up a napkin and wiped off his mouth.

George could scream.

Finally, Dream met George's nervous gaze. "What do you mean...?"

"Fuck, Dream, are you going to make me spell it out before you answer?"

"Yes, because I need to be sure..."

George sighed. He was shaking slightly, but he was resolute. The worst thing that could happen was that Dream wouldn't be interested, but they were great friends. They would get over it if need be. "Fuck it... I *love* you, Dream, like romantically."

For a moment, Dream sat in stunned silence. Then he started laughing, the maniacal laughter George always heard when Dream won a manhunt. George started to freak out, but Dream stood and started jumping up in the air, screaming, "YEEEEEEEEEESSSSSSS!!!! YEESSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS!!!! OH MY GOD!!!!"

"What?!"

"George, I love you so much, you have no idea! I literally was going to confess it to you tonight, but you beat me to it!"

"Wait, really?"

"Yes, really! Oh my God, George. I have not been subtle."

"I thought that was just how you treated your friends? I mean you flirt like that with everyone."

"Yeah, but you're special. You've always been special to me."

George was silent for a moment, taking it all in. "So... are we... Like are we dating now?"

"Do you want to be?"

"Yes..." George blushed.

"So do I."

George got a devious look in his eye and stood. "I also want to be cuddling right now." After a pause, he added, "That is, if you want to..."

"Of course I do. C'mere." Dream sank back into the couch, positioning himself for George to join, arms wide and welcoming.

George crossed the distance in a moment and immediately clamored into Dream's lap, straddling him and looking into his eyes. His butt rested on Dream's thighs (careful to avoid certain things), and after a moment, he wrapped his arm's around Dream's chest, snuggling into him as close as he could.

"I love you, George," Dream murmured into his ear, "I *love* you."

"I love you too... Clay."

Dream gasped softly, but pulled George in even closer. It was perfect.

Then George started to pull away, and Dream dropped his hands, worried.



“No, no,” George murmured, putting Dream’s arms back around him. “I just wanted to give you a kiss, maybe?”

“Oh! Yeah, okay.”

The approach was so slow, so careful, but Dream didn’t want to rush it. It felt like this entire moment was made of spun glass, and he didn’t want it to break. George was pressed against him, leaning in to *kiss* him. He never wanted it to end.

George’s lips were soft, the barest brush against Dream’s at first. Then, he sank into it, pressing them together. He squeezed Dream against his body desperately.

And Dream kissed back, gathering all of George into his arms. He never wanted to let go. He would if he needed to, but this, this was everything he ever wanted. There was no thought of taking more. The kiss was his entire world.

George was his entire world.

They finally had to pull apart for air after a while, which left them gasping into each other.

“Wow,” George panted, “I’m sorry it took that long to do that.”

“It was worth the wait. *You* are worth the wait.”

George leaned back against Dream’s arms, holding them with his hand so Dream knew to not let go. “Am I really?”

“Absolutely.”

George grinned. “I dunno. I’m not convinced. What do you like about me?”

He was half expecting Dream to tease him, but instead, Dream started lavishing him with compliments. “Well, you’re handsome, you’re funny, you’re sweet, you have a killer smile, and, when you let it, it lights up your entire face. You have this jaw line that’s absolutely to *die* for, your laughter is contagious, especially when you don’t hold back, and I could get lost in your huge eyes. You are a genuinely talented coder, too! You are also generous, humble, patient, fantastic at cuddles, and so very kissable.” Each compliment earned George a gentle kiss, some on his cheeks, some on nose, some on his forehead, and one daring one in the divot between his collarbones.

By the time Dream had run out of sweet things to say, George’s face was completely flush. He buried it in Dream’s chest.

“I win!” Dream teased, “You are amazing, and I love you. Deal with it.” He kissed George’s temple.

“Oh yeah?” George said into Dream’s shirt, before lifting his face again. “Two can play at that game.” And so George started lavishing Dream with compliments right back. “You are really good at what you do. Your presence lights up the space. Your laugh is more contagious than mine.” He paused, not as confident at first, but when he felt the heat in Dream’s cheeks as he kissed him there, he grew bolder, and kept going. “Your smile melts me. You care so deeply for everyone in your life, and you give everyone your whole heart. You *see* people, and you try to make sure that everyone has their chance to feel it. Just physically being in your presence makes me feel safer than anything else, and I don’t think there is a way to communicate how much I trust you. Just having you in my life has made it better, and I love you. I’ll say it again and again. I. Love. You.” Soon, Dream’s face was just as hot (if not more so) than George’s had been.

“I think *I* won that round,” George whispered into Dream’s ear smugly.

“Actually, I think we both won.”

~~~

After a long time of teasing and kissing, one of their phones started to ring. They both groaned, never wanting to move again.

“We could ignore it,” George suggested.

“We could, but we shouldn’t. We are healthy, mature adults, and we have the rest of the week to do whatever we want.”

“Whatever we want, huh?” George winked at Dream, kissing him again.

“Oh, absolutely, but for now...”

“Yes, yes of course.” George hitched his leg up and pulled himself off Dream, regretting it the second that he did.

It turned out to be Dream’s phone that had interrupted them, and Sapnap was calling. “Probably checking for an update.”

George immediately crawled back into Dream’s lap. “Let’s give him one then.”

“Hey guys! How’s it going?” Sapnap’s tinny voice came through the speaker.

“That’s actually the thing,” George said, “Dream and I have something to tell you. Something serious.”

“Ohhhh... So, you guys are finally dating, huh?”

“Yes, actually, we are.”

“Oh! Wait, really? Congratulations, you guys! Took you long enough. How did you finally talk it out?”

Like an old married couple, they told the story together, interspersing tidbits for each other and finishing each other’s sentences.

“Well, this is going to be absolutely insufferable,” Sapnap teased, “Get a room, Jesus.”

“We literally have a room? Like we are in a room separate from you?” George replied, feigning confusion.

“It’s just a saying dude, oh my God,” Sapnap sighed, “Anyway, so who won the bet?”

They thought about it for a while, and they decided that they both won, so they would split the cost evenly.

Sapnap gagged into the phone.

Epilogue

Chapter Notes

Hey all!!! Thank you so much for reading. Check the end of the chapter for two gifts!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Four Years Later:

Dream woke up to gentle rays of sunshine playing across his face. He sighed and snuggled into the body that lay beside him. George was still asleep, but leaned into it, letting out a sleepy hum. It felt good. Dream didn't want to get up, but that was mostly because he was comfortable. He woke up like this pretty much every morning, so he didn't need to worry about not getting to wake up next to George.

Those waking up movements eventually roused a sleepy George, who murmured a, "Good morning," before scooting back into his partner's warm body.

Dream wrapped his arms tighter around his boyfriend's torso, pulling him even closer, so there wasn't a single gap between them. "Good morning," he whispered into George's skin as he kissed his shoulder blades.

"Mmmm... Clayyyy..." He groaned, "You're too comfy and comforting, but I have things I need to do today."

"I can let you go, of course, buuuuut can those things wait five more minutes?"

"I suppose they can... Or even ten minutes."

Dream just grinned and nuzzled George's back. They lay together in the golden sunlight wrapped into each other's bodies and half dozing, until finally an alarm started going off.

"Damn," George said, pulling away.

"Damn indeed," Dream sighed, letting him go.

"Oh, don't pout, sweetheart, I'll be back later tonight." He kissed Dream on the cheek and started getting ready.

"Don't forget our big night tonight! Anniversary dinner for two!"

"I don't know if I will be up for a fancy restaurant tonight, baby."

Dream smiled, happy to anticipate his partner's needs. "I know, that's why we are having it at home, honey."

George let out a relieved sigh, before walking over to Dream to kiss him again. "I love you."

"I am pretty amazing," Dream teased, "And I love you too."

"Do you want me to dress fancy?"

“Only if you want to. I was thinking we could be comfy though.”

“God, that sounds delightful.”

“Great! Be sure to be home by 7 then.”

“See you tonight!” George said, making sure to give Dream one last kiss before he ran out the door. He was still doing streams and YouTube, but he had also started freelancing code on the side, and today was the end of a huge project. He had to present his work and get final approval, and then, he would be done with it, if all went well. (Knowing George and his coding skills, it would go swimmingly.)

Dream lay in bed for a little while longer, contemplating his schedule for the day. He had set up everything correctly, he had hoped, but he still reviewed the plans in his head, over and over, tweaking and adjusting time tables, so he could get everything right.

His phone started ringing just on time.

“Hey Nick,” Dream answered.

“Hey Clay,” Sapnap replied, “Has George gone out yet?”

As if on queue, Dream heard the car door slam and the engine start. “Yeah, he just left now.”

“Good shit. I’ll be there in ten. Please be dressed, okay?”

“That was *one* time, okay, and I *thought* you were George.”

“I know it was one time, but I’m never gonna let you live it down, soooooo.”

“Oh my GOD, Nick. You can’t tell me you weren’t at least a little happy to finally see what I’m packing.”

“You mean scarred! Besides, George is my bro, and I’m not going to be ogling my bro’s favorite goodies like that.”

Dream faked gagging sounds.

“Whatever, I’m just being respectful,” Sapnap teased.

“You are the opposite of respectful.” But Dream was laughing anyway.

“Listen, if you don’t want my help on this, I can just turn around and head home.”

“Actually don’t, though, I’m really nervous.”

“It’s already made, dude. You are literally just picking it up!”

“I need you for emotional support. My emotional support Panda.”

“Dude, I haven’t been called Pandas for YEARS.”

“I know it was a long time ago, but I’m never going to let you live it down!” Dream wheezed, barely able to breath by the end.

“Why am I helping you with anything?” Sapnap asked.

“Because you love me.”

After a long, overly dramatic sigh, Sapnap said, “Yeah, I guess so. But you owe me.”

“I’ll be your emotional support Dream anytime you want,” Dream cooed, blowing kisses into the phone.

“Oh my fucking GOD, Clay. You actual child. I’m hanging up.”

“You’ll be here soon?”

“Yeah, in like 5 minutes. GET DRESSED.”

~~~

Dream was so nervous about getting the *thing* that he made it the final stop on their huge shopping trip. He and Sapnap hit up a few décor places, a vintner, and the grocery store before finally going to their last stop.

“Literally don’t worry dude. This is George. He would love it if it was a ring pop,” Sapnap said, examining the blue velvet box in Dream’s hand.

“He might like it better, honestly. Then he won’t have to reject me. He just gets to eat candy.”

“He’s not going to reject you! He’s way more into you than you think. He just doesn’t show it. He’s always been your simp.”

“I’m going to put that in my vows. ‘You were always my simp, and I was your dream.’”

Sapnap fake retched to the side, gripping onto Dream’s arm for support. “You’re disgusting.”

“No, Sapnap, *we* are disgusting,” Dream sighed.

“Nah, I’m not that gross.”

“Weirdo! I was talking about George and I.”

“Oh, right, of course.” Sapnap pretended to cry, sniffing and wiping away a tear. “You know, it could have been me and you being disgusting together.”

“You’re such an idiot.” Dream rolled his eyes, but he couldn’t help but laugh a little.

“Listen, I gotta get these in before you propose to our boy! I can’t be hitting on married men, Dream. I have standards.”

“If he says no, we won’t *be* married men.”

“He’s not gonna say no.”

“What if he does?”

Sapnap stopped their path, grabbing Dream by both shoulders and looking him in the eye. “He’s going to say yes, Dream. I don’t know why you’re even worried.”

“Because this is *George* , and I want to make sure I do this right.”

“Dude, you have been planning this for *months* and you have been happily together for *years* . At this point, he’s probably wondering why you haven’t proposed already!”

“I was worried he wasn’t ready... But now...”

“Yeah, I know. I’ve been with you for the entire planning process, dude.” Sarnap sighed. “I’m being serious though. If I, for even a second, thought that George was going to say no, I would have stopped you, honestly. I’m rooting for you guys, and I think this is the right thing to do.”

“Thank you, Nick,” Dream whispered, wrapping his arms around him.

“Any time, dude. Now get off me before you get accused of adultery.”

~~~

George burst into the house, tired but excited. They had accepted his work, loved it even, so he was *done* . One huge project completely off his plate and someone else’s problem now. “Oh Claaayyyy! I’m hooooome!”

“George!” Dream rounded the corner, beaming that 1000 watt grin. No matter how times George came home, the grin was the same, like Dream couldn’t believe that he got to see his boyfriend’s face.

“It’s good to see you too! Is everything ready?”

Dream walked all the way into the room, and he was in full on comfy clothes. An original GeorgeNotFound grey hoodie with brown letters (or maybe red? George couldn’t tell), grey sweatpants, and fuzzy slippers. Even dressed down all the way, George couldn’t get over how handsome his partner was. *His* partner. God, life was wonderful.

“You look cozy,” George teased.

“You’re just jealous because you are still in work clothes. Go to the bedroom. I laid out an outfit for you. And take your time! I’m not quite ready yet! You’re home early!”

“Sorry, sorry. I was let go early, and I was excited to come and see you!”

Dream had been walking away, back to whatever surprise was planned, but he turned back and practically ran to George. “Never apologize for being excited to see me!” he murmured dramatically, kissing George all over his cheeks and shoulders.

“You’re such a dork,” George laughed, loving every minute of it. He caught Dream’s face in his hands, and slowly kissed him on the lips. “And I love it.”

Dream blushed so dark that even George could see it. “Stooooop.”

“Actually?”

“Never.”

George kissed him again, longer and sweeter, holding Dream's face like the precious thing it was. "I love you. Now please, finish up so I can spend more time with you."

"Yes, sir!" Dream threw a quick, fake salute and disappeared back into the forbidden area of surprises.

George looped into their bedroom, loosening his tie and kicking off his shoes as he did. On the bed was a white Dream hoodie, covered in Dream smiley faces, and a pair of Supreme sweatpants. The fuzzy slippers had cows on them, and when he looked closer, he saw that they had been embroidered with "Moo Moo Meadows."

"Oh my God, Dream," George whispered to himself, clutching the sweatshirt to his chest. Something big was coming, he could feel it.

The sweatshirt was far too large on him, but that was honestly what he preferred. By the time he was all changed, he felt so warm and fuzzy. This was the exact kind of anniversary he wanted. No expectations, no fancy people, no stranger's gazes. Just George and the man he loved enjoying each other's company.

With his outfit all situated, he leaned out the bedroom door. "Can I come out yet?"

"You came out to me a long time ago, sweetie, but I would love it if you joined me out here."

This was the man he was dating, but that man was also dating him, so he couldn't really say much.

Everything looked pretty normal when he got to the kitchen. Dream hadn't had a chance to do dishes, but George wouldn't have expected him to, since they hadn't eaten. A variety of smells wafted through as he got closer, but they all melded together. It smelled heavenly though, and George found himself wandering to the pots to try to get a hint of what there was.

"Ah ah ah!" Dream interrupted, "No spoilers!"

"Come on, Clay, it smells so goooood!"

"That's kind of the point, darling, now come with me."

Dream led George out into their backyard, which had been completely decorated. It was so beautiful, that George literally stopped in his tracks, mouth agape at everything.

An outdoor canopy had been erected just outside the sliding glass door. It was dripping with scalloped fairy lights that twinkled like stars. Each exit was draped with a dark blue silk organza, shimmering and translucent. From the center of the canopy, a huge, realistic moon light dipped low, the real light source for the scene.

The table was heavy, dark wood, laden with dishes, each encased in a silver serving cover. Dotted between the secret dishes were dark blue candles with flickering flames. In the very center of the table, in an elegant vase, was a bouquet of flowers (later revealed to be desert bluebells and irises). One of the plates was unbelievably small, no bigger than the palm of George's hand, and it had a label that read, in all caps, "DO NOT TOUCH."

George literally couldn't speak. Everything was so vibrant and colorful. Dream had made it so that everything here was something he could actually see the nuance of, and so it was the most alive any scene had ever looked for him. "Clay..." He was almost in literal tears from how sweet it was.

"You know you've done well when the date hasn't even started and they are already choked up."

Happy anniversary, my love.” Dream wrapped his arm around George’s shoulders, kissing him on the cheek.

“Clay, I honestly love you so much. This is *perfect* .”

“I know. And that’s not all.”

“What? There’s more?”

Dream just pulled apart the silk at the back, revealing a huge, roaring fire. George had been so taken back by everything else, he hadn’t even noticed the bonfire that Dream had set up in their backyard.

“Oh fuck!”

“No, George, don’t worry! I made sure that it’s far away from the fabric, which isn’t likely to burn, and there is low wind tonight. Plus I put a fire break around the entire thing, and I made sure to wet the soil. It’s completely safe.”

“I appreciate your precaution, honey, but I was more taken back by its beauty,” George laughed, gently pulling Dream’s arm around him tighter.

“Oh, right, of course...”

“It’s all so lovely, but I do feel underdressed...”

“Well, we’ll be underdressed together! Besides, we are completely alone. No one can see us but us, and I think you look cute like that.”

“I was actually thinking the same thing about you earlier,” George admitted.

“See, this is why we work! Now, let’s eat, shall we?”

“Yes, let’s.” George let himself be led back to the ornate wooden table. As Dream pulled the chair back for him, he realized it was an antique, a solid piece of wood carved into a place to sit.

After George had been seated, Dream sat himself down at the other end of the table. “Now, there are a couple rules tonight, Georgie.”

“Oh?”

“Rule the first, only I can open the serving dishes. Rule the second, enjoy yourself.”

“That sounds fair, I suppose.” George’s grin couldn’t leave his face, and he could feel his stomach starting to growl.

“Alright, first, we have this.” Dream looked a little silly, opening fancy dishes on a fancy table under a fancy canopy in a merch sweatshirt, but it also kind of fit their relationship. The first dish he opened turned out to be a bowl of soup.

George grabbed the bowl and inhaled, trying to see what soup it was. “Wait... No... You didn’t.”

“Yes, apple and pear soup. And I made it in my mouth, just like you said in your recipe video.”

“I really hope you didn’t!” George laughed, taking a bite.

It was delicious, superb even. It literally tasted like it was made with love, and he was sure to dramatically show his appreciation.

“Good?” Dream asked.

“Better than good. Amazing!” George moaned.

“Good.”

While they ate the soup, George told Dream about his day, the success with the code, and the freedom. “After this, I’ll be able to spend a *lot* of time at home. Hope you don’t get tired of me!”

Dream looked a little nervous for a moment, before shooting back, “It’s much more likely that *you’ll* get tired of *me*. ”

“That’s true,” George giggled.

“Hey! I made you this amazing meal and outdoor date and...”

“Don’t worry, sweetheart. I could never *actually* get tired of you.” He reached across the table, taking Dream’s hand in his own and kissing it lightly.

“Aww...”

After the soup, Dream revealed the next dish to be pan-seared wagyu beef. Dream had cooked it himself, very carefully, and had tested the recipe before to be sure he knew what he was doing.

George’s jaw dropped at the sight of the tender, caramelized meat in front of him. Touching it with the knife caused it to fall apart, like it wanted to be cut. The first bite had George’s eyes fluttering. “Fuck,” he whispered, softly, but with feeling.

“Fuck, indeed,” Dream had to agree.

George spent the next several minutes unable to speak, as he carefully savored every bite of that flawless steak. Everything about it was so good that he wanted to lick the plate clean, but he refrained himself.

“Oh my God, Dream,” George managed, finally finishing the last bite, “I don’t think I have ever eaten something that amazing in my entire life.”

“Maybe we should have ended on that then! Oh well. For our dessert round, something a friend showed me once. It’s layers and layers of filo dough brushed with butter, with bananas and brown sugar in the middle.”

“Did you cook all day?” George asked, incredulously.

“Not *all* day.”

The dessert was heavenly, crispy and a bit gooey like baklava and bananas foster. It was a great way to end the meal. Again, George was completely lost in the savoring of it, simply eating and enjoying bite after incredible bite.

“I knew you could cook, but this is ridiculous. Is the fourth anniversary the ‘delectable meal’ year?”

“It’s funny you should say that. No it’s not the ‘delectable meal’ year, but it is the year for fruit and

flowers in the US and silk in the UK.” Dream gestured to the set up around them.

“Are you serious? You looked it up?” George was stunned by how much thought and time Dream had spent on this, and, now that he was well fed, and done practically orgasming from the delicious food, he was starting to feel like something was really up.

“I wanted tonight to be perfect for you.”

George wasn’t sure what to say for a moment, so overwhelmed with everything, but finally, he managed, “It is.”

“We aren’t done yet. Two more things.”

“There’s more!”

“It’s a big night! Of course there’s more.” Dream carefully lifted the last two large covered dishes. They sat to either side of the huge bouquet, a nice touch of symmetry. In one dish, Dream had somehow fit an entire bottle of wine, and the other turned out to be a huge bowl of chocolate raisins.

“Clay, really?!”

“I can’t believe you are more excited about chocolate raisins than you are about the entire rest of the meal I just made for you,” Dream wheezed.

“I’m not, I’m genuinely not, but that’s a lot!”

“That’s not even half of them. There are more in the house. I figured I should stock up on your favorite snack.”

George popped one in his mouth, accepting the glass of wine that was handed to him. “Honestly, Clay, this night has been absolutely wonderful. I can’t believe it.”

Dream laughed uneasily. “Well… there’s one more thing.”

“Yeah?”

“George… We’ve known each other for a long time. I have watched you grow into yourself, become confident and strong. I have watched you fight through the worst times and triumph in the best of times. I have spent our friendship and our relationship in absolute awe of you, from the huge, high stakes clients you impress again and again, to the way you kiss my cheek so delicately. I love you, George. And…” Dream paused for a moment, taking a deep breath. “And I want to spend the rest of my life with you, if you’ll let me.”

With that, Dream lifted the very last serving cover, the one that hid the palm sized plate. Underneath was a small, navy blue box.

Dream got down on one knee, right beside George’s seat. “George, my love, will you marry me?”

The entire speech started bringing George to tears, and he kind of figured out where it was leading, but the moment Dream got down on his knee, George burst out crying, covering his mouth with his hands.

Dream wasn’t quite sure what that meant.

After a moment to collect himself, George grabbed Dream’s hands with his, pulling them toward

him, and dragging the rest of Dream with them. “Of course I’ll marry you! Of course! Of course! Of course!” Each word was a kiss to Dream’s face, trying to erase the lines that anxiety was leaving.

“Really?!” Dream asked, incredulously.

“Yes, really! I love you, you idiot! You could have proposed on the couch on a Tuesday and I would have said yes!”

“But this was a lot more fun.”

“Well, of course this was more fun! Everything about this was *perfect*!” George gushed

“Good. I’m glad. Now look at the ring, please!”

“Oh, yes, right!”

George carefully took the small blue box from Dream’s hand, cradling in his own. It was soft and velvety to his touch. He spent a moment feeling it, exploring the box, just because it was so funny to watch Dream almost explode with the desire to *finally* show it to George.

Then he opened it. A silver ring was nestled inside, with dark blue swirls and spirals that glinted with the candlelight. He slowly turned it over in his fingers, examining the detailed pattern as it sparkled. It was vibrant, like the rest of the evening had been, and he felt alive. On the inside, he noticed an inscription. When he read it, he wrapped his arms around Dream and held him close, so close that he couldn’t breathe.

It read: *You are my dream.*

“I love you so very much, Clay.”

“I love you more, George.”

“Impossible.”

“Wanna bet?”

Chapter End Notes

Hello! I just want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for reading this story. It honestly means a lot.

And since I cannot, for the life of me, make a single decision, I have some extra bits for you! The links are below, but this work should be part of a series now too!

First: [An Alternate Ending!](#) This was the original ending, but I didn't like where it was going, so I went back and tried again.

Second: [An Alternate Fight Scene!](#) This was requested multiple times, so I wrote out a much bloodier and more violent fight!

Please enjoy! And thanks again! <3

Works inspired by this one

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!